THE CHILDREN'S STORY OF THE WAR

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By Sir Edward Parrott, M.A., LL.D.

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"Faithful unto Death."

(*By kind permission of the Navy League.*)

"Boy (first class) John Travers Cornwell of *Chester* was mortally wounded early in the action. He nevertheless remained standing alone at a most exposed post, quietly awaiting orders, until the end of the action." See p. 294.

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THE CHILDREN'S STORY OF THE WAR

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BY

SIR EDWARD PARROTT, M.A., LL.D.

AUTHOR OF "BRITAIN OVERSEAS," "THE PAGEANT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE," ETC.

The First Six Months of the Year 1916

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"*Be it written,*
That all I wrought
Was for Britain,
In deed and thought:
Be it written,
That when I die,
'*Glory to Britain!*'
Is my last cry."

GEORGE MEREDITH.

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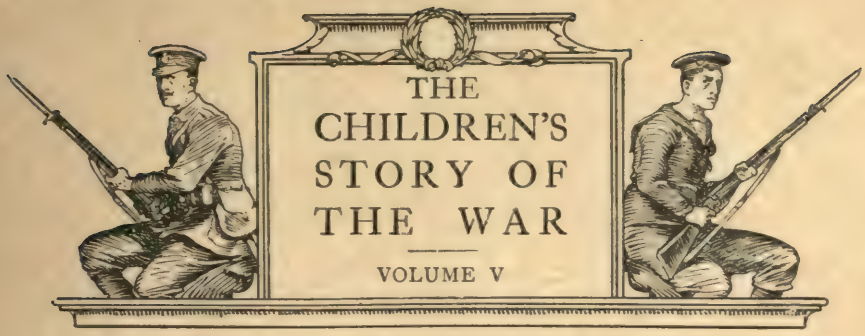

CHAPTER I.

SEVENTEEN MONTHS OF WAR.

IN the four preceding volumes of this work I have told you, in somewhat full detail, the story of seventeen months' warfare. I have tried to bring you as near to the actual fighting as possible, and to show you struggles in progress on a hundred widely separated fields. Lest, amidst all this detail, you should be confused, and, as the proverb says, not able to see the wood for the trees, let me for a few moments survey the warfare hitherto waged, in its broad, outstanding features. Before beginning the story of 1916 I will take an aviator's view of the progress of the mighty struggle in Europe from that August evening of 1914 when the German guns began to thunder against the fortress of Liége, to the bitter winter days of 1915 when the Serbian army was forced to go forth into the wilderness, yielding its native land to the invader.

First of all, I must remind you that Germany began the war absolutely certain of speedy and decisive victory. For three years she had bent all her energies to the work of making herself ready for "the Day," and she had succeeded in keeping those who were to be her foes in almost complete ignorance of her designs. While they were quite unready for war, she was prepared "to the last gaiter button." She could put into the field forces vastly superior to those which could be brought against her for many months to come, and her legions were ready to march at the moment which suited her best. Further, she was possessed of great guns such as had never before been seen on the battlefield, and myriads of machine

guns. She was right in thinking that these new weapons would bring about new methods of warfare for which she alone was prepared. With these advantages Germany believed that she could not fail, and indeed, according to all the rules, failure seemed to be impossible. When we study the course of the fighting during the first few weeks of the war, we cannot but marvel that she did not succeed. She made mistakes, it is true, but mistakes are made in every war. When all is said and done, we are at a loss to explain fully why she did not make a speedy end of her foes. We are forced to believe that the hand of God was against her, and that Divine wisdom and justice denied her victory.

When the Kaiser bade farewell to his soldiers at Potsdam, he assured them that they would return victorious "before the leaves fall." He and his General Staff were well aware that they must win soon or not at all—"We must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures." The advantages with which they could begin the war would vanish, and even pass to their enemies, if the war should be long drawn out. Should the Allies be able to stave off the first mighty onset and gain time, Germany would fail, and fail grievously. She could put armies into the field greatly outnumbering those which the Allies could array, but with every month of war these numbers were bound to dwindle. Should the war be prolonged, Russia could muster legions which would become overwhelmingly strong when the German armies were in a state of decline.

Then, too, the vast and far-seeing preparations which Germany had made would be of no avail, if the Allies were given time to build big guns and manufacture large supplies of ammunition and all the other necessaries which they lacked. So, too, with regard to the new methods of warfare which the Germans were about to use. In a short war the Allies would be destroyed before they had time to find out which of the new methods were the most effective, and by adopting them put themselves on a level with their opponents. For all these reasons Germany meant the war to be short, sharp, and sudden. In 1870 she had made a tiger-like spring upon the French, and within six weeks had captured or besieged all their regular armies. She had won in 1870 by surprise; in 1914 a similar swift and deadly swoop would again give her victory.

So all-important was time to Germany that, in order to gain

The Promise.

"We shall never sheathe the sword until Belgium recovers all, and more than all, that she has sacrificed."—MR. ASQUITH, *November 9, 1914.*

(*By kind permission of Land and Water.*)

This is one of the many striking cartoons of Mr. Louis Raemaekers, a famous Dutch painter, who espoused the cause of the Allies and fought valiantly for them with all the resources of his great art. His inspired pencil brought home to all civilized nations the hideous meaning of German Kultur.

it, she began the war with a crime. She tore up her treaties, she broke her plighted word, and pushed her armies into Belgium, which she had sworn to protect from invasion. By so doing she lost, in an hour, the sympathy of the whole civilized world, and brought Great Britain, with its vast resources, into the field against her. She had counted on keeping Great Britain out of the fray, and was prepared to offer her terms if she would forbear from war. Britain's turn was to come later, when France and Russia were subdued, and Germany was supreme on the Continent of Europe. When Great Britain declared war, there was bitter wrath in Germany. Great Britain had " spoiled her game."

There are eminent soldiers who believe that the invasion of Belgium was not only a crime but a blunder. Let me explain. The Germans believed that high-explosive shells from the huge howitzers which they had prepared as one of the great surprises of the war, could smash into shapeless ruin any known fortress within a few days. Nevertheless they feared that if they attempted to batter down the frontier strongholds of France they would suffer a fatal delay. For this reason they invaded Belgium, supposing that its inhabitants were a feeble folk, who would make a show of resistance, but no more. They hoped that the German armies in a few days would be deployed in an easy country of good roads and railways for a swift descent upon Paris from the north. But they reckoned without their host. The Belgians fought like heroes, and though their struggle was hopeless from the first, they delayed the German armies a full fortnight. You know how horribly they vented their chagrin on the poor Belgians: they filled the land with ruin and slaughter, but all their crimes availed them nothing. They were obliged to leave large forces in Belgium to hold down the people and to guard the roads and railways, which needed more and more men as they pushed southward and their lines of communication lengthened. Had they advanced directly against the French fortresses and destroyed them, they would have possessed short and direct routes to their bases, and would therefore have been able to employ larger numbers of men in the actual work of fighting.

Eighteen days after the first shots were fired the Germans were ready to begin a great sweeping movement on France. Their line extended northward from Alsace to the borders of

Belgium, and then stretched westward for eighty miles. Pivoting on the southernmost army in Alsace, they meant the whole line to swing round like a gate in order to envelop the French. The right wing, which would have the longest journey to go, was to be hurried forward with all speed, and it was hoped that it would be before Paris in ten days.

On 22nd August came the first great clash of arms. The French lay along the Meuse and Sambre, relying on the great fortress of Namur. On the left of the French, to the east and west of Mons, was a small British army. Against the French and British the Germans hurled forces which outnumbered them by two to one. When the fortress of Namur suddenly fell, the French, driven back in front and taken in flank, were forced to make a hasty retreat southward. Next day the little British army was furiously assailed, and when, late in the afternoon, it learned that it was unsupported on its right, it too was obliged to retire. The Germans followed up the retreating armies with great speed, and for a moment it seemed that the campaign had been won in three days.

In earlier pages of this work you followed and admired greatly the skill of the British commanders and the undaunted courage of their men in the famous retreat from Mons. The German general, von Kluck, with four army corps, was bent on surrounding the two British corps, and he therefore rushed his men forward by means of a vast fleet of motor cars, in the hope of getting past the British flank and round to its rear. For eight days the British army was in dire peril. Only by dint of splendid marching, fine discipline, and stubborn rearguard resistance* did it escape the trap. By 28th August the pursuit had slackened, and immediate danger had passed.

Why had the pursuit slackened? The French 5th and 4th Armies, retreating from the Meuse and the Sambre, made a great stand at Guise on 28th August, and inflicted a severe defeat on the Prussian Guard. This checked the pursuit in the centre, and enabled the rest of the retreat to be conducted at a

* In November 1915 a belated Victoria Cross was awarded to Lance-Corporal G. H. Wyatt, 3rd Battalion, Coldstream Guards, for splendid heroism during the rearguard action at Landrecies. (See Vol. II., p. 93.) He twice dashed forward and extinguished a fire which threatened to drive his comrades from their position, and later in the retreat continued firing until he was blinded by the blood which poured down his face. Directly his wounds were staunched he returned to the fighting line.

slower rate and in a more orderly fashion. Not only were the Germans blocked in the centre, but on the crest of the hills lying to the east and north of Nancy their left was held up by a very stubborn French resistance. Nor could they advance, further north, against Verdun. The commander of that fortress had very quickly learned the lesson of Namur. In the course of a few days he had constructed lines of trenches for miles in front of the fortress, and had moved out his heavy guns to form temporary batteries which could be shifted from point to point as soon as they were "spotted." The consequence was that during the last two days of August and the first seven days of September the German line from Nancy to Verdun could not advance.

So strongly were the Germans opposed in this part of the line that they believed they were faced by the main strength of the French armies. They thought, quite wrongly, that the French had massed the larger part of their forces between Nancy and Verdun. They therefore retained an undue number of troops around Verdun, and to the south-east of that position, feeling sure that von Kluck and von Buelow were quite strong enough to deal with the Allied forces to the west of the Forest of the Argonne. As a matter of fact, the bulk of the French armies were not facing the left of the Germans, but were in front of their centre and towards their right. It was this mistake which led to the wrong grouping of the German armies, and brought about the Allied victory at the Battle of the Marne.

Between 2nd September and 5th September the German line lay across France in the shape of a sickle. The handle of the sickle was that part of the line which the French were holding up in front of Nancy and Verdun. The blade of the sickle curved across the river Marne, and its tip was at Senlis, some thirty miles north-east of Paris. This sickle-shaped line was composed of seven groups of armies; five formed the blade from Senlis to the Forest of the Argonne, and two formed the handle.

Now it is important to note that when the French retired they were marching, unknown to the Germans, towards their reserves. A new French army, the 6th, had been collected on the outskirts of Paris; while another army, which we will call the 7th, was formed behind the centre of the Allied line. When the retreat came to an end, and the welcome order was

The Yser.

"We are on our way to Calais."

(By Louis Raemaekers. By kind permission of Land and Water.)

given to advance, the Allies had six groups of armies facing the five German groups stretching from the Argonne to Senlis. The total number of the Germans in the field was greater than that of the Allies by about eight to five; but the Germans had bunched up so many of their men along the handle of the sickle that the forces which faced each other along the blade were about equal. The Allies, for the first time, were fighting on even terms.

When von Kluck reached Senlis most people believed that he meant to capture Paris; but to the surprise of all observers, he prepared to curl round to the east of the city, and strike at the Allied line between the British army and the French 5th Army. He had discovered by this time that the French were prepared to sacrifice Paris rather than withdraw troops from the field to defend it. Merely to capture the undefended capital was of no use to von Kluck; his business was to destroy the Allied armies. He therefore swerved south-eastward in the attempt to pierce the Allied line between the British army and the French 5th Army. In order to do so he had to march in front of the British army. This was a very dangerous move, but he thought he might make it safely, because he believed the British to be so battered and so weary that they could not show fight. In this belief he was hopelessly wrong.

At midday on 5th September the British army attacked him on the flank with unexpected vigour, while the French 5th Army pushed forward eagerly against his front. His troops across the Marne were in great straits; but this was not all his danger. The French 6th Army—the surprise army—had been pushed forward towards Senlis, and here again he was threatened on the flank by forces which grew stronger every hour. In order to meet these flank attacks, he was forced to recall his troops from beyond the Marne, and, what is more, to borrow men hurriedly from the German armies to his left.

As the borrowed troops moved west to help him, a weak place appeared in the German centre right opposite the French 7th Army, which was under the command of that very skilful general, Foch. On 9th September, three days after the Kaiser saw his forces flung back in front of Nancy, Foch discovered the weak place in the German centre. He pushed into the gap, broke through it, and by nightfall the enemy on his right and left were rapidly retreating. Foch's men followed them up

with great ardour, going forward " like a wave along the beach." They captured thousands of prisoners, fifty guns, and an immense amount of war material ; nor did they halt in the pursuit until they were utterly worn out with twenty-four hours of almost ceaseless fighting. Between the 6th, 7th, and 8th of September the armies of von Kluck and von Buelow, farther west, were also obliged to retire, and by the 10th the whole German line from the Argonne to the Ourcq was in full retreat.

What a change had suddenly come over the spirit of the dream ! Only five days had elapsed since the Germans, flushed with victory, were within gunshot of the outer forts of Paris, and the siege of that great city was hourly expected. Now they were hurrying to the rear in order to escape destruction. The moment had come when the whole face of the conflict was suddenly changed. It is probable that the historians of the future will date the beginning of the end from that blazing September day when Foch overthrew the Prussian Guard in the marshes of St. Gond, and brought about the German retreat.

Unhappily, the pursuit was not so swift or so regular as it might have been, and the Germans were able to fall back to the river Aisne. They crossed the river unmolested, and established themselves in what has been called the strongest military position in the west of Europe. Upon the lofty plateaus which descend sharply to the river meadows, and with a stream 170 feet broad in front of them, they occupied trenches already prepared, and made a stubborn stand. On the evening of 12th September the Allies reached the river, and on the following morning the British army and the French 6th Army crossed by means of boats, rafts, and the remaining bridges, in spite of a deluge of shot and shell. In thirteen hours they had passed the stream, and the assault of the heights began. Despite great gallantry and much sacrifice, the Allies made no real headway, and before long it was clear that the Germans could not be bolted from their burrows by frontal attacks.

On the evening of 16th September General Joffre began to change his plan of campaign. He pushed his left northward in the hope of outflanking the German right. Immediately he did so the Germans responded by pushing their right northward in a parallel direction. Day by day this movement continued, each side flinging troops further and further north, and striving to turn the flank of the other. This was the famous

Race to the Sea, which the Allies won, but only just won. When friend and foe had reached the sand dunes of the Flemish coast, a double line of trenches extended from the North Sea to the borders of Switzerland, a distance of nearly five hundred miles. Across the flats of Flanders and the coalfield of North France, along the ups and downs of the Oise valley and the heights of the Aisne, across the Forest of the Argonne, round the fortress of Verdun, through Lorraine, and in every high valley of the Vosges to within sight of Alpine snows, armed men faced each other from ditches which they gradually turned into positions of strength. All the German dreams of a short, sharp war had now vanished. The Kaiser's armies were pinned and caged. The Allies had gained what they most needed—time in which to develop their resources, and to overtake the Central Powers in men, weapons, and ammunition.

The story of the war from October 13, 1914, to the end of February 1915 is the story of how the Germans strove in vain to break through the bars of their cage. During this time they were superior in men and in guns to the Allies, who, therefore, were obliged to stand on the defensive, and, at a terrible cost, play for that time which was vital to them. Still, in the first flush of their strength, the Germans made frenzied efforts to hack their way through the thin lines of steel and valour which the Allies opposed to them. In the second week of October 1914 the British army, which had been transferred from the Aisne to Flanders, had to bear the brunt of a series of the most violent efforts on the part of the enemy. He was striving to reach the Channel ports, and by so doing to cut the British army off from its bases of supply, envelop it, and threaten the shores of England.

The flats of Flanders and the coalfield of North France became the scene of battles longer and fiercer and more deadly than had ever before been known in the history of warfare. The great German attempt to break through by way of the coast was only frustrated by opening the dykes and flooding the country. Another great attempt to force a way through the salient held by the British in front of Ypres was foiled by the almost incredible valour of our men, and so, too, were the efforts which the Germans made further south. Our small regular British army—the finest army of its size that had ever been seen on a battlefield—literally sacrificed itself in beating

Ahasuerus Returns.

"Once I drove the Christ out of my door; now I am doomed to walk from the northern seas to the southern, from the western shores to the eastern mountains, asking for Peace, and none will give it to me."—*From the legend of "The Wandering Jew."*

(*By Louis Raemaekers. By kind permission of Land and Water.*)

back the foe. Again and again it held off overwhelming numbers. The Germans might bend it; they could not break it.

By the beginning of March 1915 the British strength had increased, and the Allies now felt themselves able to attack where formerly they had been on the defensive. Between the 9th of March and the close of September they undertook a series of great offensives, which were described at length in Vol. IV. of this work; but though they gained some ground, shook the enemy's positions, and captured many prisoners and much war material, they could not pierce his lines on a broad front. At the close of the year 1915 the great entrenched position which had been established from the North Sea to Switzerland in October 1914 still remained intact. The inroads made on the German lines were too small to be shown on an ordinary map. Nevertheless the Allies had won what they had fought for—time to put their military houses in order. Thenceforward they knew themselves to be more than a match for the enemy, but they knew, too, that while he could not break out, they could not break in without long and careful preparation and much sacrifice of life. The German lines had become a long series of strongholds.

* * * * * * *

Now turn we to the East, to follow briefly the ebb and flow of combat in Poland and Galicia. When the Kaiser flung down the gauntlet to Russia, she, in common with her Western Allies, was ill prepared for war. The Germans confidently counted on a long delay before the Tsar's armies could take the field. They hoped to bring France to her knees before there was any need to begin the Russian campaign in real earnest. Russia, however, mobilized with unexpected speed, and was able to array several of her armies a full fortnight before the Germans believed that she could do so. In order to draw off troops from the West, and thus relieve the French and British, who were then sorely pressed, the Russians pushed into the sacred land of East Prussia, but on the last day of August suffered a terrible defeat. In Galicia, however, they made havoc of the Austrians, and captured the eastern half of the province.

Before long they were rapidly drawing near to Cracow, the only fortress which stood between them and Silesia, the "Lancashire" of Germany. The Germans perceived their danger, and launched great forces against the railway centre of Warsaw, on

the Vistula. The Grand Duke Nicholas, who commanded the Russian armies, saw clearly that, if this city should be lost, he could not hold his gains in Galicia or fight on the German frontier. He therefore drew back his armies from Galicia to meet the German thrust along the line of the Vistula. The invader was defeated almost at the gates of Warsaw, and was chased back to his own border. Then the Russians pushed into Galicia once more, and recovered all, and more than all, that they had abandoned.

Meanwhile the Germans made another thrust at Warsaw; but a second time they suffered defeat, and were well-nigh trapped and destroyed. A third attempt, however, fared better. The Russians were driven back, but behind a river line of great strength they stood fast, and at the close of the year 1914 were still holding their own.

In April 1915 the Russians lay along the Donajetz River, only fifty miles from Cracow. They had won a long line of the Carpathian crests, and in some places were ready to advance upon the plain of Hungary, the great granary of the Central Powers. But though the Russians appeared to be in a strong position, there was grave weakness in their ranks. From the first they had suffered from a great shortage of rifles, guns, and ammunition, and now the shortage became a famine. Russia, as you know, is mainly an agricultural country. She has few great industrial cities, and for much of her metal work has to depend upon foreign countries. Her Government munition factories were too small to supply her needs, and she had few private foundries and workshops with machinery that could turn out shells, guns, and rifles at a pinch. The great misfortune which she was soon to suffer was entirely due to this fact.

The Germans knew the weakness of the Russians, and proceeded to take advantage of it. They massed on the Donajetz 1,500 or more great guns and an enormous supply of shells. Then, with the biggest army which they had as yet mustered, they began to blast their way through the Russian lines. Under a terrible avalanche of shot and shell, the Russian armies were obliged to fall back and yield up all their gains in Galicia. Not until their armies were properly supplied could they stand against the foe. The Grand Duke therefore ordered a retreat all along the line. He was prepared to fall back into the middle of Russia, if need be, in order that he might gain

time for the full equipment of his armies. He meant to draw the Germans after him into a land of swamp and forest, without good roads or railways. Then, when he was properly supplied with weapons and ammunition, he would turn on the foe, who, far from his bases, would fight at a disadvantage.

So the retreat began. Slowly the Russians fell back, yielding up the whole of Poland. Warsaw was abandoned, but not until it was a mere empty shell. The Germans had hoped to trap the Russians within the Warsaw salient, but in this they failed. The Russians fell back to a line which ran in front of the fortresses of Kovno, Grodno, and Brest Litovski; but one by one these fortresses fell, and as they did so the Russians moved ever and ever eastward. At the end of August 1915 they lay on a line from the Gulf of Riga to the Dniester, 200 miles to the east of Warsaw. The worst was now over; the tide was on the turn. The Russians had managed to supply themselves with sufficient weapons and ammunition, and were in a position to meet the foe on equal terms. They were still unbroken and undefeated when the Tsar placed himself at the head of his armies, and thereby announced to the world that Russia would fight to the bitter end.

The retirement was not yet over. The Germans struck at the great railway line from Vilna to Petrograd, and also at Vilna, and the Russians fell back thirty miles behind the city. There the retreat came to an end. By the end of September the Germans were held in check from the Gulf of Riga to the Dniester, and in the south had begun to make headway. During October von Hindenburg strove to capture Dvinsk and Riga, in order to provide winter quarters for his troops; but all his efforts were in vain, and when the snows began to fall, and icy winds to sweep across the steppes, the Germans were forced to dig in amidst swamps and meres, in the face of an enemy renewed and refreshed, and ready to make vigorous onsets as soon as the sun of the new year should dry up the thaws of spring.

Russia had passed through an agony of untold suffering, but she had never lost heart. Her armies again and again had been in the direst peril, but they had escaped, and were waiting for Russia's hour to strike. The Germans were no nearer victory than they had been when von Mackensen's guns began to thunder on the Donajetz

The Old Serb.

"Fighting with the Bulgarians against the Turks, I lost my brother; my sons fell fighting with the Greeks against the Bulgarians. But only when the Germans came were my wife and my grandchildren killed."

(*By Louis Raemaekers. By kind permission of Land and Water.*)

* * * * * * *

The year closed with the tragedy of Serbia. Three times in the year 1914 the Austrians had invaded that heroic little country, but each time they had been flung back to their own borders in rout. But the long and heavy fighting had exhausted the Serbians, and early in 1915 pestilence raged amongst them. By the autumn they had only some 200,000 fighting men left. In this hour of Serbia's great weakness the Germans prepared to clear a right of way through the country to Constantinople, so that they might tap the resources of men and material in Turkey and Asia Minor. They bought over Bulgaria, and in the second week of October Austrians, Germans, and Bulgarians attacked Serbia in front and in flank at nine separate points. The wasted Serbian army could not stand before this terrific onslaught, and it was forced to retreat into the high hills of Montenegro and the sterile wildernesses of Albania. The Allies, who had occupied Salonika, strove to advance to the relief of the Serbians, but failed to do so, and the close of the year saw Serbia in the hands of the enemy, and king, court, and army seeking refuge in an alien land.

* * * * * * *

So ended the year 1915—a black year in the calendar of the Allies. In the West the Germans had been held in a grip of iron ; in the East they had carried all before them. They had swept the Russian armies far back into their own land ; they had made another Belgium of Serbia. Eastward the sky was black with clouds, but the eye of faith could still perceive silver linings. Neither the Russian nor the Serbian armies had been destroyed ; the Germans had won territory but not victory. The short, sharp war which they had intended had developed into a long struggle, the end of which was not yet in sight, and meanwhile the advantages with which they had begun the war were passing to their foes. So in deep gloom and anxiety, yet with good hope of final success, the year 1915 drew to a close, and—

"The new sun rose, bringing the new year."

CHAPTER II.

DARK DAYS IN THE NEAR EAST.

WHILE the snow and sleet of January pinned friend and foe to their trenches in France, Flanders, and Russia, all eyes were turned to the Near East, where the curtain was rapidly descending upon the tragedy of Serbia. On the first day of the New Year a broken old man, crippled with rheumatism and all but blind, was helped ashore at Salonika. It was King Peter of Serbia. He had struggled with the remnants of his army over snowy ridges and across flooded torrents, and had shared with his famished soldiers the untold hardships of the retreat, until the border of Albania—their haven of refuge—was reached. Then, attended only by three officers and four soldiers, he had journeyed by mule and horse to the port of Scutari,* where he had rested a fortnight. When fit to travel once more, he had slowly and painfully made his way along the coast to Avlona,† where he had found an Italian ship, which gave him passage to Brindisi. Six days later he had sailed from Brindisi for Salonika—a king without a country.

Peter was never so much a king as during those terrible days of trial. His faith never wavered ; he refused to despair, even in the darkest hour.

" I believe in the liberty of Serbia," he said, " as I believe in God. It was the dream of my youth. It was for that I fought throughout manhood. It has become the faith of the twilight of my life. I live only to see Serbia free. I pray that God may let me live until the day of redemp-

* Town, Albania, on lake of the same name, 16 miles from the Adriatic Sea.

† Port of Albania, on the coast of the Adriatic Sea, about 60 miles north-east of Otranto, in Italy. Avlona was first occupied by the Italians in September 1915.

Serbian Boys who survived the Retreat to the Sea.

These are some of the boys who were brought to Oxford. The boy whose story is told on page 21 is sitting at the end of the row on your left. The readers and friends of *The Children's Story of the War* have undertaken to board, lodge, and educate ten Serbian boys for a year.

tion of my people. On that day I am ready to die if the Lord wills. I have struggled a great deal in my life, and am tired, bruised, and broken from it; but I will see—I shall see—this triumph. I shall not die before the victory of my country."

Meanwhile British, French, and Italians had occupied the port of Durazzo,* and, in the face of great difficulties, had prepared for the coming of the Serbians. Italian troops bridged rivers and marshes, made roads and jetties, and before the end of the year had conveyed nearly 130,000 Serbian soldiers to the Greek island of Corfu,† which the French had previously occupied. In this lovely island the exhausted soldiers were rested, and were nursed back to health and fighting strength. Thousands of the miserable refugees who accompanied the army were taken across the Adriatic to South Italy. Even in their wretchedness they saw with delight that the Allies were in possession of the Kaiser's summer villa on the island of Corfu.

* * * * * * *

Before I pass on, let me impress upon you the greatness of the little Serbian nation in struggling so long and heroically against overwhelming odds. We shall probably never learn the full story of Serbia's agony, but we know that even the enemy could not forbear to pay a tribute to the wonderful endurance of both army and people. It was a nation in arms that made the last despairing efforts to beat back the foe. Young boys and girls frequently fought side by side with graybeards, and all showed the most wonderful courage. A writer tells us that he met a boy of fifteen years of age who, with five comrades and a supply of hand-grenades, had held a German company at bay for two hours. He had three shrapnel wounds, but was smiling and eager to fight again. His chief promoted him corporal on the spot.

Dr. Seton Watson, a well-known writer and traveller, describes an incident which well illustrates the spirit of the Serbian people. A regiment was forced to retire before superior forces of the enemy. All the men serving the machine guns

* *Doo-rat'so*, port of Albania, 58 miles north of Avlona.

† Greek island of Ionian Sea, 270 square miles in area; famous for its oranges, wine, oil, and grapes. From 1815 to 1863 it was under British protection. The German Emperor's villa is in the neighbourhood of the port of Corfu, on the east coast of the island.

had been killed but one, and he, instead of withdrawing with his comrades, went on working his gun with such furious energy that the advancing enemy was held up. The situation was thus saved by this one man. His exploit was reported to the general, who sent for him next day and said fiercely: "You're a terrible fellow. What's this I hear of you? They tell me it was a regular massacre. How many men did you kill?" The gunner, covered with confusion, stammered out that he believed he had killed more than a hundred. "Well," said the general, frowning, "there's nothing for it but to make you a corporal." "O general!" exclaimed the man. "And now, Corporal ——, I make you a sergeant." "O general!" gasped the man, speechless with astonishment. "And now, Sergeant ——," the general went on, "I make you a lieutenant." The new officer burst into tears. "And now," cried the general, "embrace me!"

No words of mine can describe the heart-breaking scenes which were witnessed during the long retreat. It was a moving picture of woe. Men, women, and children fell by the wayside and died of hunger, cold, and fatigue; while their comrades trudged on, casting one long, lingering look behind at the land which they had lost, but still loved as the dearest on earth. But the homeless, ruined survivors, in the spirit of their king, never thought for a moment of bowing their necks to the invader's yoke. A Serbian officer during the retreat talked with an old peasant, who said: "I have lost my three sons. I lost one in the war with Turkey, another in the war with Bulgaria, and now I have lost a third in this war. My sorrow is that it will be such a long time before *their* sons grow up to the rifle."

* * * * * * *

When the retreat began the Serbian mothers, knowing that the hope of the nation lay in its children, sent their boys to follow the army to the sea. There is nothing finer in history than the splendid self-sacrifice of these Serbian mothers. It tore their hearts to part with their sons; but dearly as they loved them, they loved Serbia better. What mattered their sufferings if the manhood of Serbia might be preserved? What mattered their sacrifices if in days to come Serbia might live?

It is said that some 18,000 of these poor lads began the journey, but that only half of them ever reached the sea. For

months afterwards the wild hills of Serbia and Albania were strewn with the bones of the children who had perished. The nine thousand survivors were taken by the Allies to Corsica and to the south of France, and some of them were brought to England. In the early days of June 1916 the present writer saw in Oxford 150 of the boys who had won through.* They were fine, sturdy, intelligent lads, and those in charge of them spoke warmly of their good behaviour, their gratitude, and their great desire to learn. Their natural courtesy of bearing and address was very striking. They were eager to acquire those British virtues which they had been taught to admire.

Here is the story which was taken down from the lips of one of these Serbian boys. He was a very bright, clever lad, with a pleasing smile and excellent manners. As he told his story his eyes flashed and his gestures were quite dramatic. When a reference was made to his mother he utterly broke down.

"My name is Djordje Osmanbegovitch. My mother is a widow, and our home is in a village two hours to the south of Nish. When the war began I was attending a commercial school. I hoped to be a clerk in a bank or a business house when the war was over. I was too young to be a soldier, or I should have joined the army. There were many boys not much older than I in the ranks.

"When the retreat began my mother called me and said, 'Djordje, you must follow the army. If you stay here, the Austrians or the Bulgars will take you and make you forget that you are a Serb. If you and the other boys stay behind, there will be no men to fight for Serbia when our soldiers fall. You must follow the army to the sea. There the British or the Italians or the French will care for you. They will feed you and clothe you and teach you until you are old enough to be a soldier. Then you must join the army and give your life, if need be, to make Serbia free once more.'

"My heart was very sore when I said good-bye to my mother. I could not bear to part from her. I did not go on the march willingly. I saw my mother for the last time when I reached the turn of the road. She was waving to me, and was trying to be very brave. . . .

* In June 1916 the readers and friends of *The Children's Story of the War* undertook to lodge, board, and educate ten of these boys for a year.

"Then the long, long tramp began. For two months I struggled on over the mountains. It was easy to follow the army. Everywhere along the roads there were signs that the soldiers had passed that way. There were knapsacks and equipment that had been tossed aside; there were dead horses and mules and overturned carts, and now and then the guns that our men had been obliged to leave behind. Saddest of all, there were the bodies of many of the older soldiers, who could not keep up with the younger men. They had fallen behind, and had died of weariness, hunger, and cold. There were thousands of others on the road beside me—boys and girls, women and little children. Some of them did not go far. They lay down by the roadside, and they never got up again.

"I used to trudge on from dawn to dark. When night came I looked about for a sheltered place, and then lay down to sleep. It was very cold, and there was snow on the hills. Sometimes when I went to sleep I thought I should never wake again, but be killed by the cold. Many of the soldiers were frost-bitten. I saw some of them trying to warm their hands at a little fire. They burnt their fingers at the flame, but they could not feel the heat.

"As soon as the light was in the sky I walked on again, and every day there were fewer and fewer of us. Oh, how tired I was! Some days I was so tired that I could not walk at all. Then I lay and rested all day, and next morning I went on again, trying to catch up with the army.

"Soon I had eaten all my food, and I had to beg scraps from the soldiers. They gave me what they could, but they had very little for themselves. Once I went three whole days without a bite. I should have died, but I found some crusts in the knapsack of a dead soldier, and so I was able to go on again.

"Oh yes, many of the boys must have died on the mountains. I did not see their bodies. When they were worn out they just fell down by the roadside, and I never saw them again. I kept going on and on, and I said to myself that I would not give in.

"You do not know the road from Serbia to Albania? There are many high, bare mountains to be crossed, and there are no real roads, only tracks up and down the steep hills. In

some places we had to walk along ledges no wider than that, sir" (here he extended his arms), "with a cliff going down and down to a river far below. Many poor fellows were so weak and giddy that they fell over. So did horses and mules.

"Did I see our King? Yes, sir, several times. Once I saw him in a motor car. Then, when the roads were too bad, I saw him on horseback, and once I saw him walking. He looked very, very old, and full of pain. It was sad to see our King so, was it not?

"I thought our troubles would be over when I reached Albania; but there were robbers about, and they killed many of our poor people, and stole all that they had. But it was in Albania that I found a friend. I found my cousin, who is a captain in the army, and he gave me food and clothes and boots, which he got from the soldiers. He took care of me till we reached Durazzo. At Durazzo the Italians gave us plenty of food. They gathered the boys together—oh, what a miserable crew we were!—and sent us on board a ship, which took us to Corfu. From Corfu we sailed to Marseilles; and now some of us have come to this beautiful city (Oxford), where the trees and the meadows are so green, and there are so many palaces and beautiful streets, and where everybody is so kind to us.

"No, sir, my mother does not know that I am safe. I have written to her many times, but no letter has come from her yet. . . . What shall I do when I am nineteen? I shall be a soldier. Why do I want to be a soldier? *Because I am a Serb!* I must fight for Serbia, and help to win back my native land."

* * * * * * *

The little kingdom of the Black Mountain was now to feel the weight of the enemy's hand. Let us suppose that we are about to pay a visit to Montenegro in the month of July 1914. We take steamer from Venice to the Austrian port of Cattaro,* which stands on a lovely fiord of the Dalmatian coast. At Cattaro we board a motor diligence, which climbs a zigzag road up a mountain side until the Montenegrin frontier is reached, 2,000 feet above sea-level. Three thousand six hundred feet above us looms the dark summit of Mount Lovtchen,

* *Kat'tä-ro,* seaport of Dalmatia, Austria, at the south-east extremity of the gulf of the same name.

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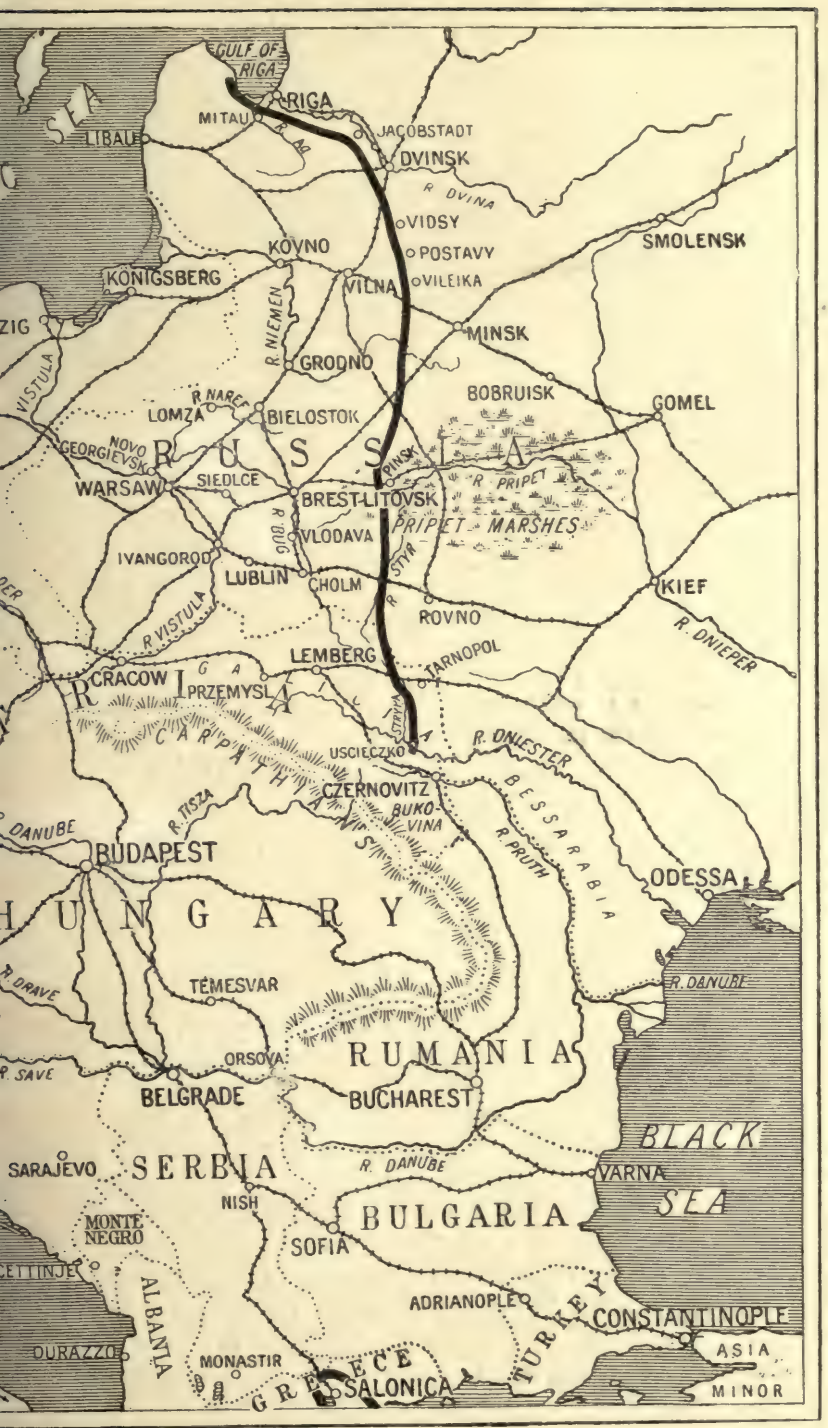
Map of Europe to illustrate the Bat



nts at the Beginning of the Year 1916.

the highest peak in Montenegro proper. Its black, forbidding aspect gives Montenegro its name of the "Black Mountain." Mount Lovtchen is sacred ground to every Montenegrin. From the mountain side issues the clear spring at which Ivan the Black, the great hero of Montenegrin legend, and the founder of Cettinje * more than four centuries ago, watered his horses. The peasants still believe that he sleeps in a cavern hard by, and that he will wake and once again lead his people when the Turk is driven from Europe. On the summit of the mountain is the grave of another prince—Peter the Second, poet, statesman, and reformer. He chose to be buried on this lofty eyrie so that his spirit might still watch over his beloved land.

We climb to the crest of the ridge, and note the forts which command the mountain road. Then we look down upon a plain ringed about by mountains, and see at the far end of it the little, red-roofed town of Cettinje. In less than three hours after leaving Cattaro we are in the main street of King Nicholas's capital. Forty years ago it was a straw-thatched village ; prior to the war it was a bright, clean little town, with a parliament house and the palace of the King.

During our stay in the capital let us learn something of the country and its people. Montenegro is about the size of Wales, and is the smallest kingdom in Europe. A traveller thus describes it : "Imagine," says he, "a circle of hills rising four hundred feet all round ; the rocks bare and gray, except for a few stunted beech or oak trees. Let these hills enclose a floor of earth on which a few crops are visible. Scatter over the flat ground and on the slopes of the hills, at intervals of a quarter of a mile, a few one-storied, one-doored, one-windowed huts—the walls of stone, the roofs of straw. The result is a Montenegrin village."

Highlands, as you know, are the chosen home of freedom, and Montenegro is no exception to the general rule. Montenegro was never under Turkish rule, though the Turks tried hard to overrun it. From 1788 to 1896 the Montenegrins fought with their fellow-Slavs in all the Russo-Turkish wars, and in 1878 they won their reward. They were granted independence, and were given thirty miles of the Adriatic coast. In

* *Chet-teen'ya*, capital of Montenegro, 17 miles east-north-east of Cattaro, and about 25 miles north of the seaport of Antivari.

1910 the Great Powers permitted the prince to take the title of king.

I need not remind you that, from the moment when the Austrian guns first opened fire on Belgrade, the Montenegrins fought valiantly side by side with their Serbian kinsmen, sharing alike their glories and their sufferings. When the terrific onslaught of Austrians, Germans, and Bulgarians in October 1915 forced the Serbian armies to retreat towards Albania, the Austrian armies in Bosnia and Herzegovina pushed into Montenegro. Though the Montenegrins fought desperately amidst their mountains, they were far too few to resist the foe, and in the first week of January 1916 Mount Lovtchen—the key-fortress of Cettinje—was besieged. The guns of the forts were old, and the small garrison of a few thousand men was sadly short of food and munitions.

While Austrian warships bombarded Mount Lovtchen from the sea, infantry assaults were launched against it under cover of gas attacks. On 10th January—the day after the last British soldier left the Gallipoli peninsula—the fortress fell, and Cettinje lay open to the invader. Three days later the Austrians announced, with a great flourish of trumpets, that King Nicholas had surrendered his country. The Allies received the news with sorrow, but with no resentment. Most people thought that Nicholas, seeing the impossibility of continuing the struggle, had made the best of a bad business, and had come to terms with his conqueror. Then came the surprising news that Nicholas had not surrendered at all. He and the queen and the royal family had escaped to Italy. Montenegro had not sullied its ancient fame by yielding; it had gone down with the flag flying. Nevertheless, the little rugged land was in the hands of the Austrians, and Nicholas was a fugitive.

* * * * * * *

In the final chapter of our fourth volume I told you how the Allies came to occupy the Greek port of Salonika, and how French and British troops strove to advance northwards in order to relieve the retreating Serbians. They came within twelve miles of the heroic rearguard which was holding the Babuna Pass, but before they could make a further advance the Serbs were forced to retire towards Albania. The Allies could no longer hope to join up with the Serbs, and as their advanced position was dangerous, they decided to retire to

Salonika. Foreseeing this movement, the Bulgars now began to attack first the French and then the British positions. The French were forced to fall back before furious assaults, and the British, who lay amongst the hills west and south of Lake Doiran, were obliged to retire in order to maintain the line.

This retirement was similar to the famous retreat from Mons, but of course on a much smaller scale. Desperate rear-guard actions were fought in order to hold back the enemy. Thanks largely to a heroic stand by the 10th British Division, the troops were withdrawn without undue loss to Salonika.

The 10th Division—which was composed of Connaught Rangers, Munster Fusiliers, Dublin Fusiliers, Inniskillings, and two English regiments—had been brought from Suvla Bay. It had already had its fill of hardships. It had scorched under the blazing summer sun of Gallipoli ; it had shivered in the icy winds of winter, and had been half drowned in the torrents of rain that flooded the trenches. For a brief space the men of the 10th Division had taken their ease in Salonika, had chummed with Greek soldiers in the cafés, and had walked arm in arm with them through the streets. One day they saw in their camp the greatest man in all Greece. He was recognized by his beard and eye-glasses, and though few of the division could pronounce his name, most of them could spell it—Venezelos.* Then came the order to entrain for Doiran, where the bare rocks and gaunt hills reminded them of Suvla. A three days' march through chill rain followed ; the men bivouacked in the open, sleeping under dripping clouds, with an oilskin beneath them and a blanket and greatcoat above them. When the march ended the old familiar trench life began again.

The rain ceased, the snow began to fall, and bitter blizzards blew. Scores of men every day became helpless from frost-bite, and had to be sent back along the narrow-gauge railway to Salonika. The 20,000 men which General Sir Bryan Mahon had led up country were sadly reduced in numbers by the time the great Bulgar rush came.

It was on Friday, December 3, 1915, that six deserters

* Eleutherios Venezelos, born in Crete in 1864. He became President of the Cretan National Assembly in 1897, and brought about the union of Crete with Greece. In 1905 he became Prime Minister of Greece. It was he who invited the Allies to land troops at Salonika, so that Greece might fulfil her treaty duties with regard to Serbia. When King Constantine refused to carry out his policy he resigned (October 6, 1915).

King Nicholas of Montenegro, with Mount Lovtchen in the Background.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

Nicholas I. was born in 1841, and in 1860 succeeded his uncle, Prince Danilo I. He reformed the army and the government, gave his land better education, and in December 1908 opened the first railway in Montenegro—from Antivari to Vir Pazar. Before the war the population of Montenegro was about 516,000; all were engaged in grazing cattle and in tillage. Every Montenegrin from eighteen to sixty-two years of age was obliged to serve in the army, and the war strength was between 30,000 and 40,000 men.

came into the British lines with the news that a big Bulgar assault was preparing. Dawn had scarcely broken the next morning when the enemy made his expected attack under the cover of a thick mist. About 5 a.m. the Bulgars drove in the outposts of the Inniskillings, who were on the extreme right, and then swooped down on the trenches, but were driven back by the rifles and machine guns of the Irishmen. Meanwhile the main body of the Bulgarians dashed down a defile leading to the centre of our front. As they emerged as from a bottle neck, our shrapnel battered and smashed them, and the bullets of rifles and machine guns swept blood-red lanes through them. Wave after wave, however, came on, and soon there was terrible hand-to-hand fighting in the trenches. Our men were driven out; but the Munsters, Connaughts, and Dublins quickly rallied, and at the bayonet's point won back the lost position. Again and again the enemy came on in massed formation, and still the brave Irish regiments continued to pour lead into them as fast as they could load their rifles.

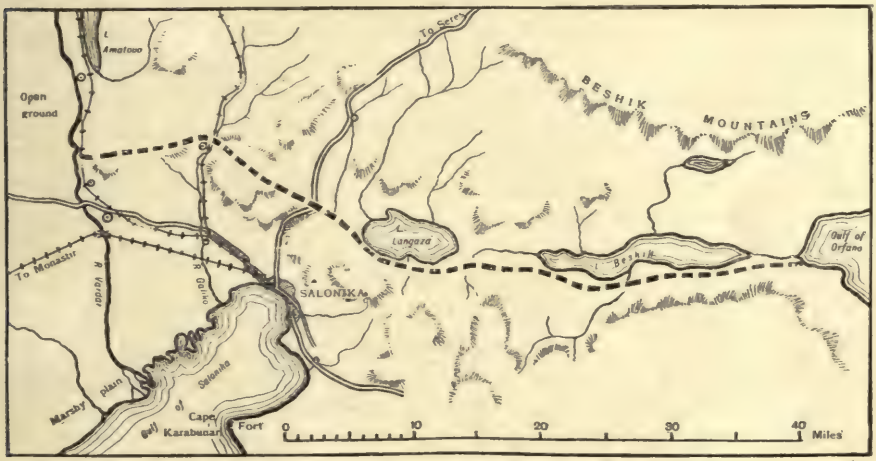
When the slow dawn drove off the mists, the enemy returned to the charge, undeterred by his heavy losses, and undismayed by our deadly gun and rifle fire. Sometimes, when the thin British line wavered, it was rallied by shouts of—"Stick it, jolly boys; give it 'em, Connaughts."

The 10th Division, however, was outnumbered by at least eight to one, and as the day advanced was forced to fall back to its second line of trenches, where another desperate resistance was made. On the night of the 17th the Bulgars made their final attempt to overwhelm the division. They nearly broke through; but British bulldog courage saved the day.

Slowly, at the rate of about two miles a day, the Allies fell back towards the Vardar valley, the artillery holding the enemy in sufficient check to give them all the respite which they needed. The danger had now passed. Terrible losses had been inflicted on the enemy at the cost of 1,300 British casualties. We also lost eight guns, which the rugged nature of the country prevented us from moving in time.

On 12th December the Allies crossed the Greek frontier with their transport and stores. They left behind them wrecked roads and railways and a wasted land. The whole retreat was a feather in the cap of General Sarrail; but the chief honours must go to the 10th Division.

While the Bulgarian troops waited on the frontier, across which they dared not pass without adding Greece to the number of their foes, French and British engineers were working night and day to put Salonika and its neighbourhood into a state of defence. The Greeks had finally agreed to our occupation, and had withdrawn their troops from the zone in which the Allies proposed to make a stand. Perhaps you wonder why we had determined to establish a base at Salonika. First of all, we knew that Austria greatly coveted the port, and would be likely to capture it if we withdrew. Had Austria done so, she would have won an excellent submarine base for operations in the Ægean Sea. Further, as long as we held Salonika we



Map showing the Allied Line of Defence before Salonika.

possessed a gateway into the Balkans, and were in a position to advance either northwards into Serbia and Bulgaria, or eastwards to Constantinople, whenever opportunity might offer. You already know that the Russians were conducting what looked like a successful campaign on the Turkish and Persian frontiers between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Should they be able to invade Asia Minor and march westwards to the Bosphorus, the Allies in Salonika might co-operate with them, in which case Constantinople would be threatened both from the east and from the west.

Here is a sketch map which shows you how the Allies fortified their new base. You may be sure that the lesson of

Verdun was taken to heart, and that instead of trying to defend the place with fixed forts, which could be smashed to fragments by the great Austrian siege guns in the course of a few days, lines of continuous trenches were pushed out far from the city. Salonika lies at the head of a long gulf, and if the city alone were defended, the enemy would be able to get on its flanks and attack it on three sides. To prevent this, a defensive line had to be made in the form of a rough semicircle from sea to sea. Fortunately the western flank of Salonika was already defended by nature; the broad, fordless river Vardar and the wide swamps on either bank formed an almost impassable barrier to any attack from the west. Directly to the north of the city extends a treeless plain rising to a range of hills which gradually sink towards the east into a trough containing two large lakes. From the eastern end of the second of these lakes a wooded valley runs to the Gulf of Orfano. The lines of defence of Salonika were carried from the Vardar along the hills, and so on, by way of the trough containing the lakes, and down the wooded valley to the sea—a distance of over sixty miles. The lines were constructed with surprising speed, and when completed were said to be impregnable.

* * * * * * *

One hundred and nine years ago the British general Wellington, when setting out to fight the French in Portugal and Spain, constructed on the broad tongue of land between the estuary of the Tagus and the sea a system of defensive works to which he could retire if the worst should befall. These were the famous lines of Torres Vedras, behind which, with his back to the sea, and succoured by the Fleet, he was able to maintain his army during the winter of 1810–11. Massena, Napoleon's famous general, reconnoitred Wellington's lines from end to end, but could discover no chink in the wall of defence, and wisely refused to attack them. Wellington was thus enabled to nurse his men through the days of frost and cold, and launch them with victorious effect upon the enemy when the summer returned. The lines which had been constructed round Salonika were a new Torres Vedras. The winter snows departed; spring blossoms appeared; the summer sun rose high in the heavens; but the enemy dared not attack. His legions halted at the frontier, "willing to wound, but afraid to strike."

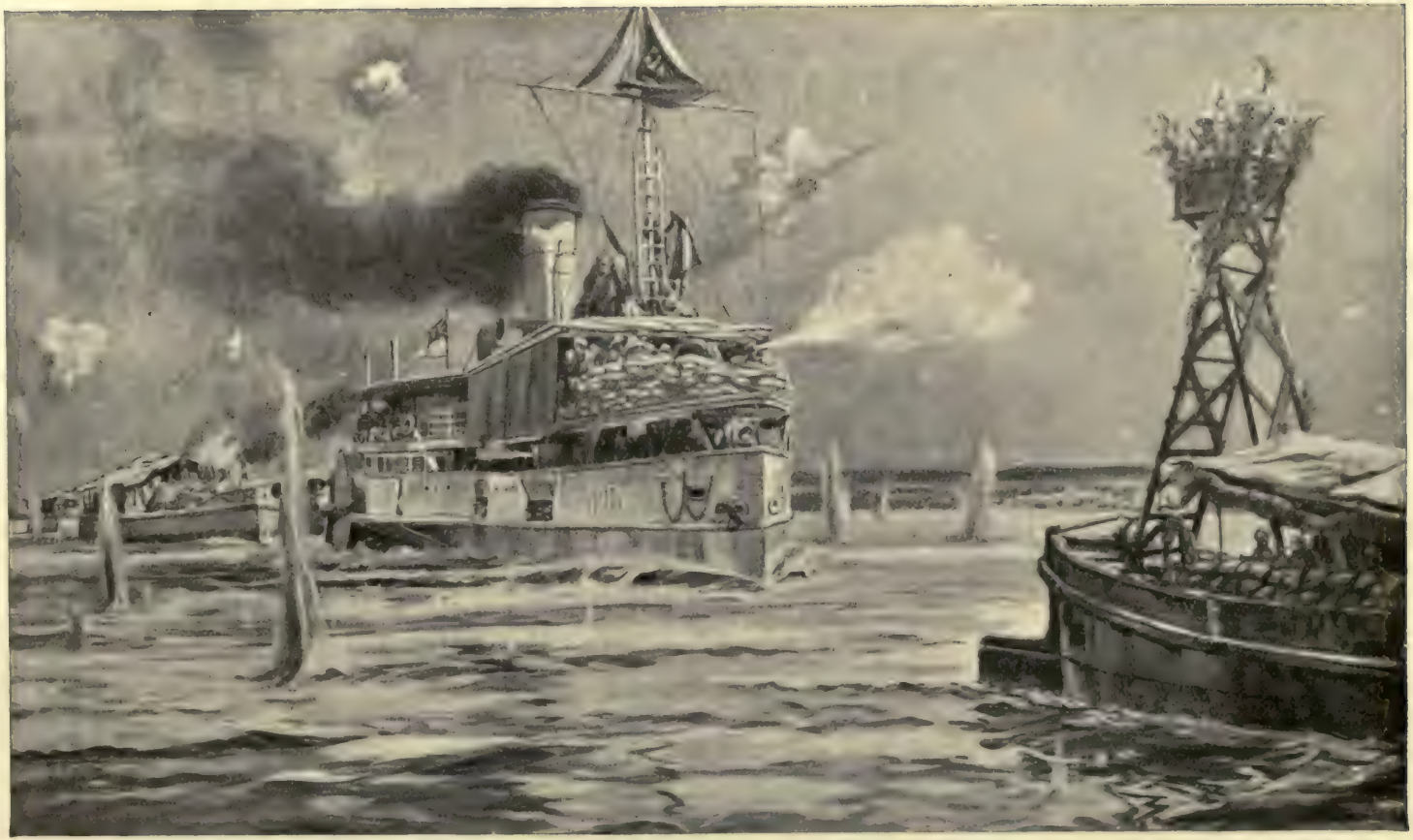
CHAPTER III.

AMPHIBIOUS WARFARE.

FROM the snowy ridges of the Balkans we must now travel eastwards, to the wastes and swamps of Mesopotamia, and see what progress our troops were making in that ancient land. In chapter xxxi. of our third volume we followed the fortunes of the small British force which pushed up the river Tigris in November 1914, captured Basra, the city of Sindbad the Sailor, and advanced to Kurna, the supposed site of the Garden of Eden. You will remember that Anglo-Indian troops were sent to the Persian Gulf to protect the Anglo-Persian oil-fields, and to occupy the holy city of Baghdad,* probably better known to you as the city of the *Arabian Nights*. It was thought necessary that we should maintain our hold on our Persian oil supplies, though the Navy was not dependent on them, and it was supposed that our capture of Baghdad would so greatly impress the wild and lawless tribesmen that they would refuse to join the enemy against us.

The campaign in Mesopotamia was remarkable because it was fought by water and by land. The main highway into the interior was a broad, navigable river. Troops and stores had to be conveyed for hundreds of miles up country by means of ships, and for this purpose a most wonderfully assorted flotilla was gathered together. Not only were there gunboats which were able to attack the enemy's positions, but there were

* Ancient city of Mesopotamia, on both banks of the Tigris, 220 miles above the outfall of the Shat-el-Arab. It contains several holy Mohammedan tombs, and is a place of pilgrimage. It was built out of the ruins of Ctesiphon (see page 44) in 763. Formerly a place of great importance, its transit trade was still considerable before the war.



River Fighting on the Tigris. Armed Steamers supporting the Fighting Columns.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

Some of the many types of river craft used in the Mesopotamian campaign are here seen. The central ship, which was formerly a passenger steamer plying between Baghdad and the Shat-el-Arab, was turned into a formidable gunboat by means of boiler plating and sandbags. Notice the observing station on this vessel, and also that on the boat to the right. The flotilla played a very important part in the amphibious operations described in this and succeeding chapter.

"paddle steamers which once plied with passengers, and now waddle along with a barge on either side, one perhaps containing a portable wireless station, and the other bullocks for heavy guns ashore. There are once respectable tugs which stagger along under a weight of boiler plating, and are armed with guns of varying character; there is a launch with batteries of 4.7's, looking like a sardine between two cigarette boxes; there is a steamer with a tree growing amidships, in the branches of which officers fondly imagine they are invisible to friend and foe. . . . And this fleet is the cavalry screen, advance guard, rear guard, flank guard, railway, general headquarters, heavy artillery, line of communications, field ambulance, and base of supply for the Mesopotamian Expedition. . . . When reading the dispatches we must always bear in mind this fleet, and picture following in its wake flocks of store-bearing river craft with acres of white sails bellying in fair curves, and peaking up sharp angles against the sky."

It is hard for us in the West to realize the great difficulties and hardships of this Mesopotamian campaign. The climate of Mesopotamia is one of the worst in the world: the bitter cold of winter, the raw dampness of spring, the terrific heat of summer, and the swarms of mosquitoes severely try the constitution of the hardiest of men, and no wonder that many of our soldiers, Indian as well as British, fell victims to it. The river road was always liable to be blocked for a longer or shorter time by unexpected mudbanks, and thus food and stores were often delayed. Land marches were often held up, and plans were thwarted by the sudden appearance of unmapped swamps, and all the time the wild, lawless Arabs were waiting for an opportunity to plunder our convoys, attack our hospitals, cut our telegraph wires, or convey information to the enemy. If we are to appreciate what our men accomplished in Mesopotamia, we must never forget the manifold difficulties which beset them on every hand.

Now let me take up the thread of the narrative where I dropped it in chapter xxxi. of our third volume. At the beginning of the year 1915 our troops were securely entrenched on both sides of the Tigris at Kurna and Mezera,* and we commanded the highway of the river to the Persian Gulf. From the first our army was far too small to cope with the Turkish troops opposed to it. Reinforcements arrived from India early in the year, but still the British force was gravely outnumbered. The whole expedition was placed under the command of Sir John Nixon.

Nothing of first-rate importance happened until April. We

* See Map, Vol. III., page 277.

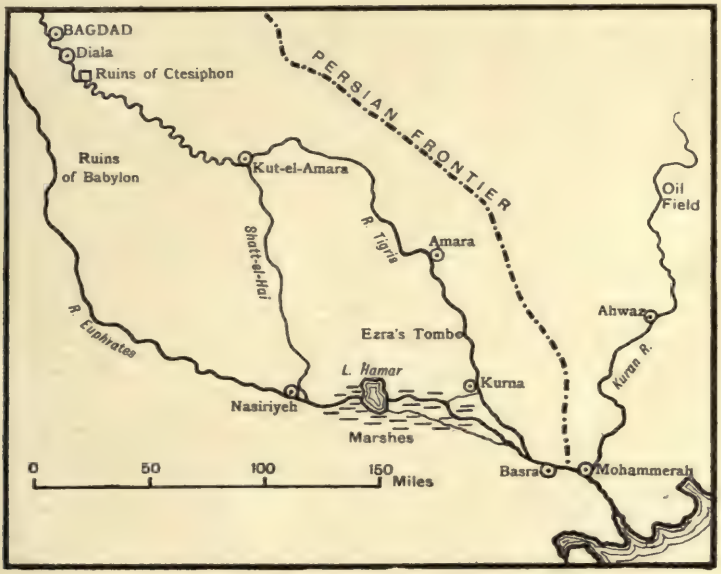
fought several small engagements to prevent the enemy from clustering in strength; but we could not advance, because the country on both sides of the river from Basra northwards to forty miles beyond Kurna was flooded, and formed an inland sea two to six feet deep. On 12th April, however, the Turks, who numbered 18,000, and had with them some twenty guns, attacked our positions near Basra from the north, south, and west. In the course of a three days' battle our men completely routed the enemy, and a final bayonet charge by the 2nd Norfolks and 120th Infantry put them to flight.

During the battle Major Wheeler, as you will learn on a later page, won the Victoria Cross by a deed of great gallantry, but, unhappily, lost his life. "It was a sheer, dogged soldier's fight," wrote General Mellis, who was in command; "no words of mine can adequately express my admiration of those gallant regiments which won through." Our casualties amounted to about 700 officers and men, and the Turkish loss was not less than 7,000. We captured several machine guns, and large quantities of stores and equipment, including motor cars and ammunition wagons. During their retreat across the desert the Arabs hung on the Turkish rear, killing the stragglers and looting everything they could lay hands on. After assembling his officers and denouncing the faithlessness of the Arabs, the Turkish commander, in despair, shot himself.

By the middle of May all preparations had been made for an advance up the Tigris. A large number of "bellums"—that is, long, narrow boats of the country—had been collected and armoured with iron plates. In these the infantry were to be conveyed. For several weeks our men were trained in punting and boat work. Guns had also been mounted on rafts, barges, tugs, and paddle-steamers, and floating hospitals had been rigged up. The country was still flooded, and a successful advance could only be made by the careful working together of Army and Navy. The weather was terribly hot, and the sweltering days were followed by still, sultry nights.

The Turks at this time lay entrenched north of Kurna, on islands in the wide-spreading floods. In the early morning of 31st May, while mine-sweepers were clearing the stream, our guns heavily shelled the Turkish position. Then a force under General Townshend made a frontal attack, and carried the enemy's trenches at the point of the bayonet. Some of his

men had to pole their boats through thick reeds for over a mile and wade waist-deep in water before they could land. While the frontal attack was proceeding, another force had pushed up the river, and had fallen fiercely on the Turkish flank. Early next morning an aeroplane reported that the Turks were in full retreat up the Tigris. At once the flotilla went in pursuit. The enemy was kept on the run, and two days later General Townshend reached Amara, about 75 miles north of Kurna. During the fighting of the previous four days he had captured 1,773 prisoners, 17 guns, 2,718 rifles,



Map to illustrate the Mesopotamian Campaign.

four river steamers, a number of lighters and boats, besides large quantities of stores and ammunition.

Before Sir John Nixon could advance any further it was necessary for him to clear the enemy from his flanks. If you look at the map on this page, you will see that Kurna stands at the junction of the Euphrates and the Tigris. About one hundred miles west of Kurna you notice, on the Euphrates, the town of Nasiriyeh,* the Turkish headquarters of the Basra province and an important Arab centre. It was very probable

* *Naz-e-re'ya.*

that as our troops pushed up the Tigris the enemy would make a dash from Nasiriyeh against Basra. To prevent this, Sir John Nixon sent General Gorringe with a force to occupy the place. I wish I had space to describe this expedition fully, because it would give you an excellent example of what British soldiers and sailors can do in the face of almost incredible difficulties. Our boats had to make their way through a maze of creeks and lagoons amidst thick date groves, while the enemy's snipers were busy from the banks. Often the boats were aground for days, and frequently the " bellums " had to be dragged across mudbanks, and in one case across sixty yards of dry ground. A great dam across the river had to be destroyed, and parties had frequently to be landed to chase away the enemy. But in spite of all obstacles General Gorringe fought his way to Nasiriyeh, and by 25th June the enemy had been driven off across the marshes, and the place was in our hands.

Now that the dangerous left flank was cleared, the advance up the Tigris could continue. By 12th September the expedition was ready to proceed. While the troops made route-marches along the banks, the flotilla advanced upstream. There were frequent cavalry skirmishes with the Turks, but the intense heat—the thermometer ranged from 110° to 116° in the shade—and the swarms of flies were more deadly than the enemy. On 15th September the column reached Sannaiyat, eight miles from the enemy's position covering Kut-el-Amara, a town of about 6,000 inhabitants, situated at the bend of the Tigris, and at the head of the route to the Persian hills. It is 220 miles by river from Baghdad, and more than 300 miles from the Persian Gulf. The column rested at Kut until 25th September, and received reinforcements.

CHAPTER IV.

A BID FOR BAGHDAD.

THE army of Nur-ed-Din Bey lay astride the river, some seven miles north-east of Kut, in a very strong position. The German general, von der Goltz,* had been for months in Constantinople preparing the Turkish armies for the field, and directing their operations. Probably the Turks had constructed their defences on the Tigris according to his plans. On the left bank of the river they had dug seven miles of trenches, which linked up the gaps between the river and three marshes. These trenches were so sited that they could not be seen until the troops were almost upon them. There was pumping apparatus in the trenches; there were mazes of barbed wire in front of them, and the ground over which our men had to advance was honeycombed with mines and rifle pits. Between the lines of fire trenches were miles of communication trenches, which provided covered outlets to the river. A great boom of barges and wire cables had been constructed to block the waterway. On the right bank there were five miles of similar trenches behind a canal embankment, twenty feet high, on which were a number of watch towers. Such was the position which our men had now to attack. The enemy awaited our coming with nearly 10,000 men.

On 26th September General Townshend was within four miles of the Turkish position at Sannaiyat. His plan was to make a great attack on the left bank of the river; but in order to deceive the enemy, he began operations with a feint against the right bank. All day long the assault on the right bank continued, but at night he silently withdrew his troops to the

* German field-marshal, born 1844; known as "Goltz Pasha," because he organized the Turkish army which was defeated during the Balkan War.

Aeroplane View, looking towards Kut, showing the

On December 3, 1915, General Townshend was surrounded at Kut-el-Amara by the Turks, who had force. When the enemy was strongly reinforced he had no option but to retire. A relief column under it was twenty-five miles down the Tigris from Kut. Sir John Nixon, the Commander-in-Chief, was

On January 7–9, 1916, General Aylmer won a victory, and was able to continue his advance. The Turks,

On January 13, the Turks were driven back to the Umm-el-Hannah position, but bad weather put a not proceed. Meanwhile the Turks strengthened their lines. Their first position was at Umm-el- in rear of Falahiyah. The main Turkish lines ran through Es Sinn, six miles east of Kut-el-Amara. On distance of about fifteen miles. For more than a month there was a weary deadlock. General Aylmer's appeared too strong to be carried. He therefore transferred the bulk of his troops to the right bank, and obliged to fall back. Then came another long lull. Not till April 5th, when General Gorringe had

On April 5th our 13th Division captured five successive lines of trenches at Umm-el-Hannah, and on position at Falahiyah. In the afternoon the Turks made an unsuccessful counter-attack to recover the Falahiyah lines. During the night and on the 6th, the 3rd Division reached a position from which it bank to within eleven miles of Kut, and during the fighting the Turks are said to have lost 3,000 killed. attempt was made to get a supply ship through to the beleaguered town on April 24th, but it ran aground, was forced to surrender after sustaining an heroic siege of 143 days. In the above view the spectator the view has been drawn from an aeroplane some thousands of feet above the river Tigris and the

Operations of the Relief Column. (See Chapter V.)

pursued him from Ctesiphon, where he had fought a stubborn battle and had lost about one-third of his General Aylmer was moving up the Tigris, but, owing to the floods, could not advance. By January 13th nvalided about this time, and was succeeded by Lieutenant-General Sir Percy Lake.

vith a force estimated at three divisions, were posted behind the watercourse which enters the Tigris at Orah. top to active operations there. On February 4th there was heavy fighting, but General Aylmer could Hannah. Three miles behind, at Falahiyah, was a second line; the third was at Sannaiyat, 6,000 yards he right bank it extended to the Shat-al-Hai, and on the left to the Suwaicha Marsh—a total orce was unable to operate by both flanks, and the successive lines of entrenchments on the left bank n March 6th moved against the Es Sinn position. He attacked on the 8th, but from want of water was ssumed command, was there any progress. Meanwhile the Russians were overrunning Western Persia. he same day General Keary on the right bank carried the works which flanked the second Turkish ost position on the right bank. This was repulsed, and the 13th Division went forward and stormed the ould enfilade the Turks on the left bank. On the 17th and 18th the 3rd Division advanced on the south On April 23rd we were checked at Sannaiyat, and then bad weather put an end to the operations. An nd was captured four miles from Kut. All hope of relieving General Townshend had now gone, and he s looking from General Gorringe's point of view—up the Tigris towards Kut. You must imagine that djacent marshes.

left bank by means of a specially constructed bridge. Next morning at dawn the battle opened in real earnest.

The Turkish trenches were far too strong to be carried by a frontal attack, so General Townshend determined to get round the flank. This task was entrusted to General Delamain, who had carried out the feint of the previous day. While General Fry's brigade, resting its left on the line of the river, pinned the opposing Turks to their trenches, Delamain's troops, in two columns, advanced against the enemy's left—one column assaulting the flank entrenchments directly, and the other making a wide sweep round the flank to attack them in the rear. Our right was protected by cavalry and armoured motor cars, and the enemy was thus prevented from sending assistance to his threatened left. Shortly after ten in the morning the flank redoubts were brilliantly carried by the 2nd Dorsets and Indian troops. Meanwhile the other column was well round the flank, and by two in the afternoon the whole of the enemy's left had been rolled up, despite several fierce counter-attacks. Prisoners, some field guns, and great quantities of rifles and ammunition were captured.

By this time Delamain's men were worn out with long marching and hard fighting under the tropical sun, and were suffering severely from want of water. After a brief rest the column was moved southwards in order to attack the rear of the enemy holding the centre and right. While doing so, seven enemy regiments, with guns, suddenly appeared, marching from the south-west. At once Delamain turned to attack them. "The sight of the approaching enemy, and the prospect of getting at him in the open with the bayonet, put new life into our infantry. . . . For the time thirst and fatigue were forgotten. The attack was made in the most gallant manner with great dash. The enemy was routed with one magnificent rush, which captured four guns and inflicted great losses on the Turks." The enemy fought stubbornly, and was only saved from complete destruction by the approach of night.

Throughout the fight the gunboats on the river did yeoman service. Late in the afternoon, under the command of Lieutenant-Commander Cookson, they tried to force a passage through the boom that blocked their way. The ships came under a terrific fire from both banks at close range, but the

The 2nd Dorsets storming the Turkish Redoubts outside Kut-el-Amara.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

To the 2nd Dorsets was given the difficult task of storming the redoubts on the extreme flank of the Turkish position outside Kut-el-Amara. The regiment came up against some unbroken barbed wire about fifty yards from the loopholes of the Turkish trenches, which were covered in with brushwood. Nothing could be seen but a row of loopholes, and a tall pole from which floated the Turkish flag. The 2nd Dorsets gallantly carried the position, but they had to pay the price of victory.

boats pushed on. The *Comet* rammed the boom, but could not break through. While trying to cut a wire cable that held the barges of the boom together, Lieutenant-Commander Cookson was shot dead.

The sun rose next morning on long lines of empty trenches. The Turks had fled during the night, and had escaped along the bank of the Tigris. That same morning we took up the pursuit both by land and water; but the shifting shallows of the river caused many delays, and the enemy was not greatly harried in his retreat. Kut-el-Amara was occupied, and the flotilla pushed on with all possible speed. Our airmen reported that the Turks were falling back at the rate of twenty-five miles a day, and that they showed no sign of halting before reaching Ctesiphon,* where they had previously prepared very strong positions.

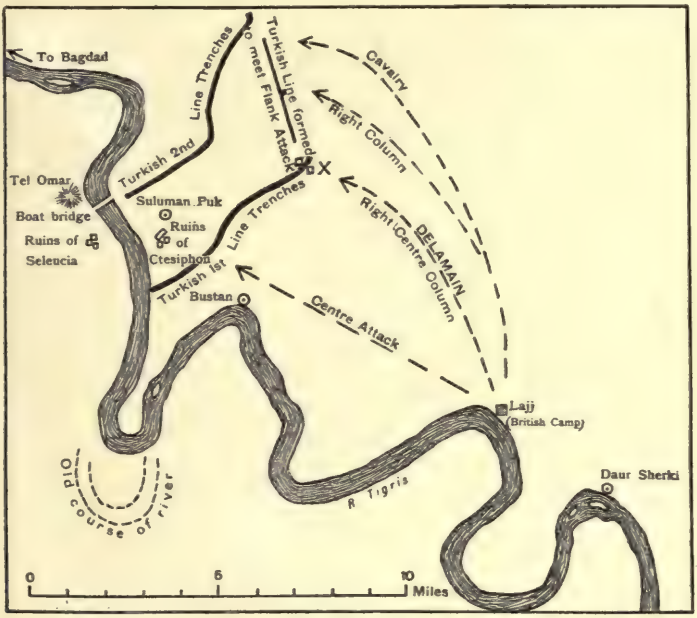
The victory of Kut-el-Amara came as a welcome surprise to the British people. It was a very real success. Four thousand Turks had been put out of action, and fourteen guns, many rifles, much ammunition, and other war material had been captured. Considering the severity of the fighting, our casualties were not great. Of the 1,233 men who were hit, a large number were only slightly wounded. "I do not think," said the Prime Minister, "that in the whole course of the war there has been a series of operations more carefully contrived, more brilliantly conducted, and with a better prospect of final success." The question now was, Should we advance any further? For a time, so it is said, the Government was undecided, but finally it gave the order to advance. General Townshend asked for large reinforcements. These, however, were not forthcoming, and he had to push on with an army far too small for the purpose.

October is a delightful month in Mesopotamia. The days are bright and clear, the nights are cool, the floods have subsided, and the marshes are rapidly drying. It is the best season of the year for an advance. By 5th October our vanguard was thirty miles east of Ctesiphon. Then came a delay of six weeks, which was fully occupied with preparations. On 21st

* *Tes'i-fon*, ancient city of Assyria, on east bank of Tigris, about 30 miles south-east of Baghdad, and about 50 miles north of ancient Babylon. It stands opposite to another ancient city, Seleucia, which was founded three hundred years B.C.

November the expedition reached Lajj, nine miles from the ancient city.

Ctesiphon is a name of ancient renown, but its glories have long since departed. Nineteen and a half centuries ago it was the capital of an empire. In later times it was a battleground of Romans and Parthians, and Roman emperors more than once entered it as conquerors. The Emperor Severus, who afterwards made a campaign against the Scots, and died in the city of York, sacked Ctesiphon in the year 119 B.C., and



Battle of Ctesiphon.

carried away 100,000 prisoners. Later on, the city rose from its ashes, and became more glorious than it had ever been. Noble buildings were erected, amongst them a palace with a huge archway 120 feet high. Though built two thousand years ago, this archway still stands as a testimony to the skill of ancient builders. It can be seen for many miles, so flat is the surrounding country. To-day the ancient city is little more than a squalid Turkish village, dotted with the ruins of its former grandeur.

The Turkish position at Ctesiphon lay astride the Tigris.

On the map you will see the lines of trenches which were constructed by German engineers on the right bank of the river. There were similar lines on the other bank, and the two wings were connected by a bridge of boats. The mounds of waste and ruin had been turned into redoubts armed with machine guns. The whole position was very strong. Thanks to our airmen, we knew exactly how the Turks were posted. We knew, too, that the enemy had been recently reinforced by four fresh divisions.

Our plan of attack was similar to that which had given us victory at Sannaiyat. One column was to advance against the centre of the first Turkish position, a second column against the left, and a third column was to sweep round and get to the rear. A still wider sweep was to be made by the cavalry. The plan was a good one, but we had hardly enough men to carry it out. All told, our numbers did not exceed 14,000 men, while the Turks had about 20,000, with strong reserves.

General Townshend marched his men through the night of the 21st and the early morning of the 22nd. The moon shone brightly, and after seven miles had been covered the ruins of Ctesiphon were seen casting purple shadows on the yellow plain. Before dawn we had dug in against the centre and the flank, the right column was well to the left rear of the enemy, while the cavalry were on the flank of the Turkish reserve trenches. Dawn broke, and revealed strong bodies of troops moving northwards to check our right and our cavalry. They formed up, as you see from the map, on a line parallel with the river and uniting the first and second line of trenches. The outflanking which had been so successful at Sannaiyat could not now be repeated.

About a quarter to nine we attacked all along the line. The right, being gravely outnumbered, lost ground, but at X on the map we pierced the Turkish line by means of artillery fire. The first line was won, and 1,300 prisoners were in our hands ; but the Turks, assisted by the forces which had defied our right and our cavalry, retired in good order to their second line, where they awaited the next shock.

At half-past two in the afternoon we advanced against the second line. We broke into it, captured eight guns, and made good our hold of the enemy's trenches. But by this time the enemy was strongly reinforced, and he counter-attacked again

and again. The captured guns changed hands several times. Just before nightfall we were obliged to fall back upon the first position which we had won, and the guns had to be abandoned. Both sides were now worn out, and we had lost so heavily in killed and wounded that we were in no fit condition to attack again. About one-third of our men had fallen, and 800 of them were dead. The Turks were in no better plight. The battlefield was littered with their killed and wounded, and many of the trenches were choked with dead. One Turkish division had been almost wholly destroyed. But next day the Turks brought up their reserves, and from three o'clock in the afternoon till long after dark they fiercely attacked our line. Every time they came on they were hurled back with severe losses. It is estimated that during the battle the Turks lost some 10,000 men in killed and wounded.

It was now clear that we could advance no further, and lack of water and our weakness in men soon forced us to withdraw. We fell back towards Kut, and the first part of our retirement was unmolested. Early in the evening of 1st December, when General Townshend's little army reached camp, about forty-five miles as the crow flies above Kut, the smoke of Turkish fires was seen. The enemy was following us up; he had recovered from his severe handling at Ctesiphon, and was now about to harry our retreat. Had he been able to fall upon us without delay, scarcely a man could have escaped alive.

At daybreak on 1st December the Turks attacked in strength. Our artillery did great execution, and the cavalry rode over a column that was attempting to envelop our right flank. The enemy was checked, and we continued our retirement in perfect order under a heavy shell fire. By midday the enemy was shaken off, but we dared not halt until we had covered twenty-seven miles. After three hours' rest we took the road again, and moved on another fifteen miles. We were now only four miles from Kut, and men and horses were so weary that they could go no further.

Next morning (3rd December) all that remained of the Baghdad Expedition, which had set out with such high hopes six weeks before, staggered into Kut. It had done magnificently, but it had achieved nothing. From the first it was too small a force to carry out the work assigned to it. By remarkable courage, steadiness, and self-sacrifice it had made

a wonderful advance and a no less wonderful retirement, but it could no longer cope with the numbers of the enemy rapidly gathering against it. By the 5th of December the enemy was fast closing in on Kut from all sides except the west. General Townshend retained one steamer as a ferry boat, and sent the other and the barges down stream. Next day all the cavalry but one squadron started off to fight their way towards Basra, and happily managed to get through the enemy's lines with but trifling casualties. On the evening of 6th December the enemy had completely encircled the town. The siege had begun.

* * * * * * *

The following two officers were awarded the Victoria Cross for remarkable deeds of gallantry:—

Major George Godfrey Massy Wheeler, 7th Hariana Lancers, Indian Army.

During the battle fought on 12th April, near Basra, Major Wheeler noticed a group of snipers who were gathered round a flag, and were firing upon our artillery observation post. He asked and obtained permission to charge with his squadron, and clear them away. His squadron galloped forward with great dash, and at the point of the lance scattered the enemy in all directions. As they swarmed to the rear our guns caught them, and did great execution. Major Wheeler only lost one man, and had three horses wounded. Next day he and his squadron charged a mound from which the enemy was galling our right flank. He was seen far ahead of his men, riding straight for the enemy's standards, which were planted on the mound, when a shot struck him and he fell dead.

Lieutenant-Commander Edgar Christopher Cookson, D.S.O., R.N.

You have already heard of this hero's great exploit. You will remember that on 28th September our gunboats tried to destroy the barricade of boats which the enemy had made across the river. An attempt to sink the centre boat by gun fire failed, and then Lieutenant-Commander Cookson ordered his ship, the *Comet*, to be placed alongside. Armed with an axe, he jumped on to the boat, and tried to cut the wire hawsers connecting it with the other craft. He was thus a good mark for the enemy's sharpshooters, and fell under a hail of bullets. He died within a very few minutes.

CHAPTER V.

THE SIEGE AND FALL OF KUT.

THE history of our empire abounds in dramatic stories of little British forces hemmed in by enemy hordes, yet holding out for months at a time against hunger, thirst, fatigue, disease, and constant attempts to overwhelm them. In some cases the story ends happily. Relief comes in the very nick of time, and haggard, starving men are rescued when almost at their last gasp. No boy or girl who reads these pages can ever forget the relief of Lucknow,* of Chitral,† of Ladysmith,‡ or Mafeking.§ Sometimes, however, the story ends in disaster. The relieving force fails to arrive, or arrives too late, and the besieged, after a long agony, are slaughtered or carried away into captivity. But whether the story ends happily or sadly, there is always something in it to stir our hearts, and make us proud of our fellow-countrymen. We Britons place at the head of all military virtues dogged endurance—the courage that "sticks it" to the bitter end. We glory in him who is

"Strong with the strength of the race to command, to obey, to endure."

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* On the Gumti, a tributary of the Ganges, 550 miles from Calcutta, India. During the Indian Mutiny the British were besieged in the Residency from July 2 to November 17, 1857.

† Native state, north-west frontier of Kashmir, India. In 1895 Sir George Robertson was besieged in the fort for forty-seven days, but was relieved by Colonel Kelly after a brilliant march.

‡ Town on the Klip River, Natal, British South Africa. Besieged by the Boers for four months (November 2, 1899, to February 28, 1900), but successfully relieved.

§ Town, Bechuanaland, British South Africa, 200 miles north by east of Kimberley. Besieged by the Boers from October 11, 1899, to May 18, 1900, when a relieving force arrived.

I am now going to tell you the story of a siege which British forces endured in the old heroic spirit. The defenders were shut up in a space only four times as big as Hyde Park; they were surrounded by enemies who poured shot and shell upon them, and strove again and again, but always in vain, to break through their frail defences. They had no shelter save their trenches and the mud huts of Arab townsfolk; they had no food except what they brought with them, and the scanty supplies which a small and poor town afforded; they suffered hunger and thirst; they fell victims to disease, and were tortured by that hope deferred that "maketh the heart sick." Yet they held out, grimly cheerful, for twenty long weeks, and never thought of surrender until starvation stared them in the face. They were not more than 14,000 fighting men when they set out for Baghdad; they were less than 9,000 when the siege came to an end. By far the largest number of the defenders were Indian soldiers, and we may with full justice offer to them the fine tribute which Tennyson paid to their fellow-countrymen who fought side by side with us at Lucknow fifty-nine years ago:—

"Praise to our Indian brothers, and let the dark face have his due!
Thanks to the kindly dark faces who fought with us, faithful and few!
Fought with the bravest among us, and drove them, and smote them, and slew."

* * * * * * *

The town of Kut, in which General Townshend and his forces were now besieged, is a miserable Arab village—"a collection of mud huts, thrown together with winding alleys and narrow passages, all open to the winds and rains and burning heat." But though it is as miserable a town as one can find in the whole of Mesopotamia, it is well placed for defence. Round about Kut the Tigris makes a deep U-shaped loop, and thus forms a promontory about a mile wide, with the river, about 250 yards broad, on all sides save one. The isthmus, which is 3,200 yards across, is the only land approach to the town. General Townshend, as you may suppose, lost no time in making entrenchments across this neck of land from river bank to river bank. He knew from the first that the enemy would strive his hardest to break in through this line, and that it would have to bear the brunt of his heaviest attacks. At the north-east end of his entrenchments he therefore erected a strong redoubt.

Indian Troops wading through the Floods on the Tigris.
(*From the picture by Philip Dodd. By permission of The Sphere.*)

The little map on the next page will make the British defences of Kut quite clear to you. Notice, to the north of the redoubt, a bridge of boats crossing the river. General Townshend pushed a detachment across this bridge, and made a bridgehead for its defence. He also held a liquorice factory and a village beyond the river to the south-west of the town.

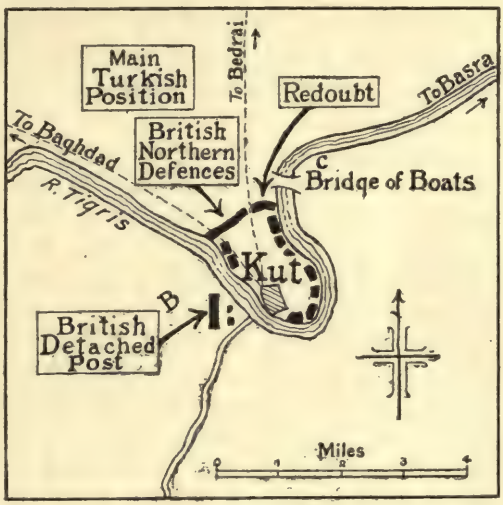
On the morning of the 9th December 1915, Nur-ed-Din, the Turkish commander, sent a letter to General Townshend demanding his surrender. The British general refused, and almost immediately the town was heavily bombarded from the north, the west, and the south-east, and attacks were made from all the points of the compass. The detachment holding the bridgehead was driven in. The bridge could no longer be held ; so, lest it should fall into the hands of the enemy and enable him to move his troops the more readily from bank to bank, General Townshend determined to destroy it. In the night Sapper-Lieutenant Matthews very gallantly led a party to the bridge and blew it up.

During the following days the Turks flung tons of shot and shell into Kut, and made several infantry attacks against the isthmus, but without success. More than once our men rushed out of the redoubt and fell furiously on the enemy. The Turks now bent all their energies to the task of capturing the redoubt. On Christmas Eve, when the famous 52nd Division had arrived from the Caucasus front, they breached the parapet in several places and got inside; but they were driven out again, leaving 200 dead behind. On Christmas night they broke through once more, and flung bombs on the defenders at close quarters; but before morning they had been hurled out again with great loss, and had retired to trenches 500 yards from our front. They had suffered great losses, and it was said that the 52nd Division had been almost wholly destroyed. Do what they might, the Turks could not break down our wall of defence. They asked for an armistice on the 29th, in order to bury their dead and remove their wounded from the front of the fort. After the armistice there were no more infantry attacks. The Turks had already lost 4,000 men, and it was clear that they could only rush the British positions at a terrific sacrifice of life. They therefore blockaded the place, and left their unseen ally, hunger, to do its fell work.

Early in January 1916 General Townshend telegraphed home this cheerful message :—

> " Going strong.
> Everything all right.
> Shall be relieved soon."

He had good hopes of speedy relief, for a force under General Aylmer was fighting its way up the river, and had already forced the Turks to retire to a new and very strong position only twenty-three miles from Kut.* Unhappily, the weather prevented a speedy pursuit. Heavy rain fell, high winds blew, and the ground became a quagmire. Advance by water and by land was impossible until the 17th of January.



On the 21st the relief force attacked the new Turkish position ; but though it punished the enemy sorely, it could not break through his lines. When the fight was over, the wounded lay out in the mud and the rain, and the heavens opened with a terrible deluge. The river was brimful, and our camps were under water. Fighting could not continue in these conditions. For the rest of the month, and all through February, no headway could be made. On 6th March, however, three columns set out across a waterless desert to fall on the extreme right of that part of the enemy's main position which lay on the right bank of the river. Through the night of the 7th our men trudged on in the inky darkness, the silence being only broken by the howl of the jackal and the cry of geese in flight. Soon after daylight our guns unlimbered, and with startling suddenness our shells began to fall fast and thick upon the surprised enemy. Before long, guns were heard booming in the rear of the Turks. They were British guns, manned by

* See pp. 40, 41 for an aviator's view of the progress of the relieving force.

General Townshend's men in besieged Kut. Our officers, peering through their field glasses, could actually see the flash of the guns, which were only eight miles away. During the day we made attack after attack; but the position was too strong for us, and we were forced to retire to our old lines.

The relief force was now reinforced, and was placed under the command of General Gorringe.

On 5th April success smiled upon us. The 13th Division, which had won such renown in Gallipoli, carried the first and second lines of the enemy's position on the left bank of the river, and the Turks had again to fall back. Seven days later our men attacked again on the right bank. They pushed across a flooded plain, crossed by deep ditches, and forced the enemy to retire in some places as much as three miles. By the 17th we had occupied his advanced lines, and had inflicted great losses on him.

We were now about fourteen miles below Kut, and we could advance no further. The deep trenches, the strong redoubts, and the barbed-wire tangles of the enemy's main position were too strong for us. On the 17th the Turks began their counter-attacks, and there was much fierce fighting, often at close quarters. Though the enemy lost over 3,000 in two days' battle, he forced us back and pinned us. The weather again grew very stormy, and miles of country on either side of the river lay deep under water. General Gorringe and his troops had done all that men could do. The Turks, with flood and storm as their allies, could not be overcome, and the little force in Kut looked in vain for relief.

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Now let us return to the besieged town, and see how the heroic defenders were faring. I have already told you that after the Turks were beaten off on 24th December and on Christmas Day, 1915, they turned the siege into a blockade. Except that they shelled the place every night with their big guns, they made no attacks upon it. From Christmas Day onwards the defenders were fighting, not Turks, but hunger.

At first nobody went on short commons, and happily a supply of warm clothing had arrived just before the siege began. On 24th January a large quantity of grain was discovered, but it could not be used because there were no millstones with which to grind it. Millstones, however, were soon obtained—

from the sky! The aeroplanes with the relief force managed to drop millstones in Kut, and the engine which drove the grinding machinery was set going with oil from the naval barges.

From this time onwards friendly aeroplanes made frequent visits, and dropped into the camp such light articles as rifle-cleaners, spare parts for the wireless telegraph, nets for fishing, etc. At one time they dropped cigarettes and tobacco; but the supplies were so small that they would not go round, and General Townshend, who was determined that no man should be favoured beyond his fellows, gave orders that no more were to be sent. Then our men strove to satisfy their craving by smoking lime leaves, or ginger or baked tea leaves. Throughout the siege General Townshend shared every hardship with his troops.

A flying man gives the following account of one of his visits to Kut :—

"I constantly flew over the Turkish positions, and circled above beleaguered Kut. On one occasion we carried five parcels to General Townshend's force. It is not easy to drop anything from an aeroplane flying at the height of 5,000 feet, and we are obliged to keep that distance up if we do not want to fall a victim to the Turkish anti-aircraft guns. We managed, however, to drop three packets out of the five into our lines. Of course we have to drop them by means of a parachute. I am afraid that the two other packets fell into Turkish lines; but the wind always blows strongly across the desert, and a parachute is not an accurate thing, so we were perhaps lucky to get three packets to their right destination. Flying over the desert is an exciting pastime, for if one has engine trouble and comes down, one is faced with two possible fates—either to be found and 'finished off' by the Arabs, or else not to be found, and so die of hunger and thirst."

Before the end of January scurvy began to set in. Vegetable seeds were planted about 26th January, and they bore welcome fruit before the siege came to an end. The real privations of the garrison began about the middle of February, when the milk gave out, and the sick in the hospitals had to be fed on cornflour or rice water. Early in February the British soldiers were receiving a twelve-ounce loaf, one pound of meat, a few groceries, and a small supply of dates daily. The Indians received supplies on much the same scale until 3rd March, when the rations were reduced. They were cut down again on 9th March, and by 16th April the flour supply for British and Indians was reduced to four ounces per day. During the

Sick Men from Kut arriving at Basra. (See page 58.)

(*Photo, Central News.*)

last few days almost the only food in the camp was that which the aviators dropped.

Early in the siege the horses were killed for food, and when they were gone the mules suffered the same fate. One of the last mules to be slaughtered had taken part in three Indian frontier campaigns, and wore the ribbons of these expeditions round its neck. Twice the butcher refused to kill it, but in the end it had to go the way of the others. For the most part the troops spent the long, weary days in their dug-outs. Except near the liquorice factory, there was no place where games could be played, and for the most part the men were too weak for unnecessary exertion. Some of them fished with success, and thus eked out their scanty rations. Hostile aeroplanes frequently flew over the camp and dropped bombs, some of which caused much damage.

"After 20th April," writes a correspondent with the Mesopotamian forces, "many of the Arabs, feeling the pinch of hunger, made attempts to escape by the river from Kut. These men are splendid swimmers. Two of them got through to our camp with the help of the strong current. One, supported by skin bladders, made the journey by night in eight hours; the other concealed himself during the day, and arrived on the second night. A third, the sole survivor of a party of eighteen, came through on a raft with a bullet in his leg. The Turks fired on them from the bank. Four had been killed, and the others, many of them wounded, dived into the water. It is doubtful if any escaped."

On the night of 24th–25th April the steamship *Julnar*, laden with supplies, made a gallant attempt to run the blockade and reach Kut. The vessel was commanded by Lieutenant Firman, who knew that the venture was a forlorn hope, yet cheerfully volunteered for the duty. She managed to get within four miles of the besieged town, and then went aground. Some days later she was seen with her funnels riddled with bullets and her propeller damaged. Her gallant commander and several of her crew had fallen. The Turks announced that they had captured the vessel, and with it hundreds of tons of foodstuffs.

All hope of succour had now gone. On the 27th General Townshend informed the enemy that he was ready to surrender Kut if he and his army were allowed to go free. The Turks however, would make no conditions with him, and the next day the British flag was hauled down, a white flag was run up, and the enemy marched in. General Townshend handed

his sword to the Turkish commander, who courteously returned it. The men who were then holding our front line had been in the trenches without relief for a fortnight. They were so weary that they could not carry back their kit. Thus, after holding out for 143 days, the British in Kut became prisoners of war. Some 2,970 British troops of all ranks and services, together with 6,000 Indian troops and their followers, passed under the yoke* that day.

After the surrender the Turks behaved very well to their prisoners. Turkish officers gave our soldiers cigarettes as they left Kut for the prisoners' camp upstream, and Turks and Britons were soon on friendly terms. Doctors and chaplains were left with the sick in Kut, and a hospital ship was allowed to carry our wounded back to their own people in exchange for Turkish prisoners. The enemy also permitted a tug with two lighters, each laden with 500 tons of food and stores, to proceed to the prisoners' camp. When the tug arrived the Indians were bathing —a luxury which they had not enjoyed for months, as the river-bath at Kut was exposed to snipers. When the British soldiers sighted the tug they shouted for tobacco, and 100 lbs. of plug was thrown to them over the heads of the sentries. Lime juice, potatoes, onions, groceries, and medical comforts were soon landed, and the men sat down to enjoy their first " square meal " for more than 143 days.

On board the hospital ship which sailed down stream from Basra, with its freight of sick and wounded, were three four-footed members of the Kut garrison—Spot, General Townshend's fox-terrier, and Peggy and Diamond, two terriers belonging to General Mellis. From Spot's collar hung a paper setting forth in his master's handwriting his record of faithful service from the Battle of Kurna to the defence of Kut.

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The fall of Kut was received by the nation with deep regret, but with great admiration for the splendid endurance of those who had held out so long and so cheerfully against desperate odds. All recognized that the relieving force had striven with great valour and determination to reach the beleaguered city, and that it had been foiled, not by the Turks,

* The Romans made those who surrendered to them pass under a yoke which consisted of two upright spears with a third fixed horizontally across them.

but by the Tigris, the desert, and the swamps. No one imagined that the surrender of 2,970 British and 6,000 Indians was anything more than a blow to our national pride ; it could not possibly have any effect on the issue of the great struggle. There were many, however, who thought that the attempt to capture Baghdad was a grievous mistake from the first, and they asked bitterly why so small a force had been marching through deserts hundreds of miles from the sea to take a city which could not be surprised, and would be certain to be strongly fortified before it could be attacked. There were others who complained that the medical and transport arrangements were very bad ; but, as a whole, the nation received the news calmly, and saw no reason to despond.

There was a very important reason why the nation should remain calm in the face of this unfortunate set-back. While the fate of Kut was hanging in the balance, the Russians had captured Erzerum, the great stronghold of Armenia, and also Trebizond, an important Turkish post on the Black Sea. On the day that Kut fell the Russians were on the upper waters of the Tigris, not more than eighty miles from the main Turkish line of communication. The Turkish army which had been so long held up by the defence of Kut was now in a position which daily grew more dangerous. General Gorringe's relieving force was facing it on the Tigris, and the Russians were threatening to cut it off from the railway by which alone it could properly maintain itself in Mesopotamia.

Now you begin to see that General Townshend's struggles and sufferings had not been in vain. Students of the war were not slow to point out that if the Russians continued to advance, the Turks in Mesopotamia must do one of three things : they must either suffer themselves to be cut off, and in the course of time be destroyed ; they must retire, and abandon the province altogether ; or they must summon from Constantinople all their reserves, in which case the Russians would be able to march westwards through Asia Minor with but little opposition. In a later chapter I shall describe the remarkable Russian campaign which placed the Allies in such a favourable position at the very time when a British force was on the verge of disaster.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STORY OF THE "MOEWE."*—I.

ONE solitary armed ship, and she only for a few brief weeks, flew the German flag upon the high seas during the year 1915. Prior to the war Germany possessed nearly 88,000 merchant vessels of various kinds, yet during 1915 not a single one of them furrowed the oceans of the world. Thanks to the British navy, the foreign shipping trade of Germany was utterly extinguished. In none of our previous wars have we made so complete and so rapid an end of an enemy's overseas commerce as during the present great struggle.

You will remember that when the war broke out German raiders were at large, ready to prey on British merchantmen. I have already told you that an armed ship on the ocean routes is as powerful for mischief as a cat amongst pigeons. One warship can work terrible havoc amongst peaceful trading vessels. The *Emden*, for example, in seven weeks captured twenty-one ships, with a tonnage of 700,000, and a value of three millions sterling. You can easily see that, if the Germans had been able to keep a score of such raiders at sea, our shipping would have been at their mercy. Happily, such German cruisers as were at large were hunted down one by one, and soon the trade routes were as safe as in the days of peace. When Admiral Sturdee destroyed von Spee's squadron, on December 8, 1914, all real danger to our high seas trade was over.

The Germans were, of course, eager to send out warships to harry our merchant vessels; but our navy kept such a close and careful watch that for a whole year only one ship got through. She was one of the tenders of the *Karlsruhe*, and our Admiralty let us know that she had succeeded in getting past our patrols

* *Moo'vai.*

in March 1915. As, however, nothing further was heard of her, we may suppose that she did little or no mischief. The German navy, as you know, dared not leave its harbours except for short, sharp dashes into the North Sea, and the " canal fleet " became the laughing-stock of the world. Suddenly, in January 1916, an armed enemy vessel appeared in the Atlantic, and for a couple of months had a remarkable career of destruction. In this chapter I am going to tell you the story of her dramatic appearance, and of her strange adventures. Before, however, I do so, I must give you some account of Britain's " Watch on the Brine." You will then be able to understand how the German ship managed to run the gauntlet and reach the open sea.

In our fourth volume I told you that in March 1915 the British Government began a blockade of the North Sea coast of Germany—that is, it made use of its naval power to stop all sea-borne goods from entering or leaving that country. A nation at war can use every lawful means of overcoming its enemy, and one of the lawful means is to stop every ship trying to leave or enter the enemy's ports. This is known as a blockade. The nation which successfully carries on a blockade can deprive the enemy of imported food and of those materials for warfare which he is obliged to obtain from foreign countries. A successful blockade may cause such a shortage of munitions or bring about such a scarcity of food as to force the enemy to sue for peace.

Strange as it may seem to you, the high explosives now so largely used in warfare are made from cotton. Almost equally important in these days of motor transport is rubber. Both cotton and rubber are tropical products, and therefore cannot be grown in Germany, but must be imported from abroad. Copper is almost essential for the manufacture of shells, and Germany produces less than one-twenty-fifth of the world's output—less, in fact, than Great Britain gets from her own mines each year. You can now see that if cotton, rubber, copper, and the other things which Germany cannot sufficiently provide for herself are not allowed to enter the country, she must be greatly hampered in carrying on the war.

The same is true, in a lesser degree, in the case of food. Germany grows much of the food which her people consume ; but even in time of peace she has to import large quan-

tities of wheat, barley, maize, hog's lard, butter, and eggs, and, of course, all such tropical products as coffee and tea. In time of war so many men and horses are serving with the army that the land cannot be properly tilled, and the harvests are bound to decrease. Foreign food is, therefore, required in ever-increasing quantities to supply the shortage; and if imported food is cut off, the people must go on short commons. While it is probably true that Germany cannot be starved out, it is certain that by means of a blockade she can be made to suffer much hardship, and thus be brought all the sooner to her knees.

At first our blockade of Germany was not very strict, and large quantities of food, cotton, copper, chemicals, rubber, and other necessary things got through; but in April 1915 we began to tighten our grip. After a good deal of public agitation and delay, we cut off Germany's supply of cotton, and stopped her foreign food supply. Before long the Germans began to feel the pinch of hunger, and as the blockade continued they felt it more and more. They tried to retaliate, as you know, by means of a submarine campaign, in the course of which they sank some hundreds of ships, both British and neutral, and were responsible for the deaths of some thousands of innocent sailors and passengers. We waged war on their submarines, and, according to an American authority, we had captured, by the middle of May 1916, some 130 of them. Germany's campaign of piracy and murder brought her into sharp conflict with the United States, and we shall learn in a later chapter that, under threat of war, she had to promise to put an end to it.

Our greatest difficulty in carrying on the blockade was with neutral nations, especially with the United States, Holland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Neutrals have every right to carry on trade—if they can—with all other countries, whether they are at war or not; but by the law of nations we, or any other country at war, can say to neutrals, "Here is a list of the things which we shall *not* allow you to send to Germany. If your shippers try to run cargoes of these things into Germany, they will do so at their peril. Our patrol boats will stop all ships making for the Continent, and will search them. Any ship which contains forbidden articles will be seized and taken before a Prize Court, which will decide what is to happen to

A British Naval Patrol approaching a suspicious Neutral at Night.
(*From the picture by C. E. Turner. By permission of The Sphere.*)

her and her cargo. Of course, ships which contain no forbidden goods will be allowed to proceed."

Now, if Germany were an island we could by this means prevent almost all goods from reaching her shores. Germany, as you know, is not an island, but a continental country, joined on by land to the neutral countries of Denmark, Holland, and Switzerland, and only separated by a narrow inland sea, in which we cannot carry on a blockade, from Norway and Sweden, which are also neutral. Suppose a Dutch ship laden with food, copper, cotton, rubber, and so forth, is stopped by one of our patrols, and her captain says, "This cargo is not meant for Germany, but for Holland." What then? Are we to let it go free? While Holland has every right to receive goods from abroad, we have the right to stop her from supplying Germany with forbidden goods from over the seas. Before our patrols will let the Dutch ship proceed they must be assured that the goods are really going to be used by the Dutch, and are not to be sent over the frontier for the use of the Germans. We try to form an estimate of the amount of overseas goods which Holland needs for her own people, and we only allow this amount to pass. If Holland were allowed to import an unlimited quantity of foreign goods, the Dutch could send large supplies into Germany, and thus make our blockade of no effect.

Let me tell you how this difficulty was met. We asked the leading merchants in each of the neutral countries to form societies which were to receive all imported goods, and were to guarantee us that such goods should not reach the enemy in any form. In return for this guarantee we promised not to interfere with their trade unless there was some trickery afoot. Arrangements of this kind were made with Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, and Swiss societies, and as the German complaints of shortage of food and other supplies grew louder and louder, we may suppose that the plan served its purpose.

CHAPTER VII.

THE STORY OF THE "MOEWE."—II.

I NEED not tell you that the blockade meant an immense amount of hard and anxious work for the patrol ships of our navy. Night and day, in all weathers and at all seasons, they had to keep the two gateways to the North Sea—the entrance by way of the Strait of Dover, and the passage north of Scotland. Every foreign ship that entered these waters had to be visited and, in many cases, taken into harbour to be searched. An American writer tells us that his vessel was taken into a northern harbour, where he saw more than a score of neutral merchant vessels. Some of them, such as the ship on which he had crossed the Atlantic, were only detained for the examination of passengers and cargo; others were prizes which would be held until the end of the war.

"These were the flies caught in the great web spun by the British across the northern trade route. Beyond the harbour's mouth, in the bleak waters about these Orkney Isles, about the bleak Shetland Islands to the north and the Hebrides to the south-west, along the eastern coasts of Scotland, and out across the North Sea towards the Norwegian shore, converted cruisers on patrol duty are for ever weaving their criss-cross courses with Dreadnoughts waiting within easy call. . . . I pictured a similar web centring at Dover, in which all the Channel shipping becomes enmeshed; a third at Gibraltar, which controls traffic between America and the Mediterranean ports. . . . I understood for the first time what Englishmen mean when they declare that 'Britannia rules the waves.'"

We must never forget the great debt which we owe to the seamen of our naval patrols. In fair weather and in foul, in tempest, fog, and calm, they kept their ceaseless watch, sighting and stopping every ship that showed itself; boarding incoming vessels by means of small boats in the roughest of seas, examining the papers, the crews, passengers, and cargoes

of the boarded ships, and sifting out innocent traders from those who were trying to succour the enemy. All this work had to be done in the face of constant danger from mines and submarines, and at a heavy loss of ships and men. There were always foreign captains ready to run the blockade in order to obtain the high prices which the Germans were ready to pay for forbidden goods, and the patrols had ever to be on the lookout to foil such attempts. Every kind of trick was practised, but our seamen were rarely deceived. If they were at all suspicious of a vessel they ordered it into harbour, and there it was closely examined. X-ray photographs were taken of bales and cases, and more than once rubber and other forbidden goods were discovered hidden away amidst innocent material.

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Now for the story which I promised you several pages ago. On New Year's Day, 1916, a German raider of about 3,000 tons register, disguised as a Norwegian fruit trader, slipped out of the Kiel Canal during a fog and made her way northwards. She was commanded by Captain Count von Dohna Schlodien, a young naval officer, and, as the sequel will show, a bold and skilful seaman. According to the story of one of her lieutenants, Hans Berg, of the German Naval Reserve, several British warships sighted the raider, and signalled to her, asking if she had seen any Germans about. She replied that she had seen none, and wished them a happy new year. Without being molested, she managed to reach the Atlantic, and off Cape Finisterre captured the *Corbridge*, a Cardiff steamer, laden with coal. This vessel she took along with her as a collier. The same day she seized another steamer with a cargo of 5,000 tons of copper ore, and sank her. Between the 13th and the 15th she sent to the bottom four other vessels.

Now let the scene change to the British mail steamer *Appam*, of the Elder-Dempster line. In the bright, clear weather of 16th January she was sixty miles north of Madeira, on her homeward voyage from French West Africa. If all went well another ten days would see her safely in Plymouth. Early in the day she sighted the smoke of a steamer, afterwards discovered to be the *Moewe*,* on the horizon, and later on

* She had been originally christened the *Ponga*, but had been rebaptized as the *Moewe*, thus taking the name of a gunboat which had been sunk at Dar-es-Salaam.

A Vision: Jellicoe and the Shade of Nelson.

"Admirals all, for England's sake,
Honour be yours and fame;
And honour, as long as waves shall break,
To Nelson's peerless name."—NEWBOLT.

discovered that she was flying the British red ensign on the forepeak—that is, she was showing a signal of distress. The captain of the *Appam* thought she was out of control.

Sir Edward Merewether, Governor of Sierra Leone, who was one of the *Appam's* passengers, gives us the following account of the incident:—

"Captain Harrison believed she was a British tramp, and changed his course to bear down on her. At her stern was a flag drooped in folds. We discovered later that this ensign was weighted, so that it would droop. All of us who gave it a second's thought took it for granted that it was the Union Jack. As a matter of fact it was the German Imperial Navy Ensign.

"When Captain Harrison had come within two hundred yards of the stranger and had stopped his engines, a sudden transformation in the other boat's appearance electrified us. All the forward and after railings, which had looked quite solid until that instant, simply disappeared as if by magic. We learned later that whole sections of these solid-looking railings were actually composed of accordion-like strips of steel which dropped into a slot at the pressure of a button on the bridge. At the same instant the square structures which we had mistaken for deck houses also collapsed, and exposed the bareness of the guns. I counted the guns, and saw that there were two mounted forward, four mounted aft, and one 3-pounder on the poop deck. These guns ranged between 4-inch and 6-inch according to my judgment."

The *Moewe* was no longer a Norwegian fruit-trader, but an armed cruiser. As the railings slid together and the canvas screens shrouding the guns fell away, a shell flew shrieking over the *Appam's* bridge. The gunners had been crouching behind the screens, waiting at their stations to open fire the moment their weapons were unmasked. The *Appam* had a 3-inch gun mounted astern, but, of course, it was not of the slightest use against the *Moewe's* heavy armament. The *Appam* could offer no resistance.

The captain of the *Moewe* now hailed the *Appam* through a megaphone, and asked if there were any Germans aboard. Captain Harrison at once admitted that he had twenty German prisoners of war. A few moments later a boat containing Lieutenant Berg and twenty-one sailors was seen putting off from the *Moewe*. Before long, armed Germans had swarmed up the sides, and were on the deck of the British ship. One of them rushed to the *Appam's* one gun, and flung the breech-block overboard, thus rendering it useless. Then the German prisoners were released, armed with rifles, and posted

as guards over the passengers and crew, who were forced to give up their firearms, knives, telescopes, etc. Shortly afterwards Captain Harrison and his officers were carried to the *Moewe* for a conference. Later on the British officers and all the prisoners which the *Moewe* had taken from the vessels which it had sunk were sent back to the *Appam*. When this was done the *Appam*'s engines were set going, and, under the navigation of her own crew, she was started on a course known only to the German commander. A German was stationed at the wireless apparatus to receive all messages, but to allow none to be sent out. In this way the whereabouts of British cruisers patrolling the regular ocean lanes were discovered. Lieutenant Berg, who took charge of the prize, steered far out of the ordinary steamer track.

Sir Edward Merewether tells us that the Germans behaved very well to their captives.

"I had no idea Germans could be so courteous as these Germans proved to be. If by chance they bumped into one while walking on deck they apologized; and this spirit of decency in my opinion was largely owing to the fine example set by Lieutenant Berg himself. He was the embodiment of courtesy from first to last."

The *Moewe* stood by the *Appam* for two days, and during this time Sir Edward and his fellow-passengers had an opportunity of seeing the Germans in action. On the 17th a British liner, the *Clan Mactavish*, was sighted hull down on the horizon. While the *Appam* continued her course, the *Moewe* made for the *Clan Mactavish*, and when abaft her beam signalled, "Stop at once; I am a German cruiser." The British captain at once ordered the engineers to get up full speed, and meanwhile told the *Moewe* that he was obeying her order. The *Moewe* thereupon stopped her engines, and the *Clan Mactavish* dashed ahead, and soon left the raider astern. I will tell you the story of the gallant but unavailing fight made by the Scottish liner in the words of Mr. MacIntyre, her third officer:—

"As soon as the *Moewe* found that we were not stopped, he started again full speed ahead, and fired across our bows. Our own gunners then got busy at the captain's orders and fired back. Then the fun began. The next shell struck us on the fo'c'sle head, smashing up the windlass and the look-out man, a Lascar. The third went through the second officer's room and the steward's room; it seemed to be shrapnel, for splinters were

How the "Moewe" captured the "Appam," and afterwards attacked and sank the "Clan Mactavish."

(By permission of The Sphere.)

hurled all over the deck. All this time our own two gunners were firing as hard as they could, and we could see that they were hitting. The German was only 200 yards away. One of their shots struck the top of the engine room, killing seventeen men and wounding five, all Lascars. Another hit us below the water-line and badly damaged us. It was useless to carry on the fight, so the captain ordered 'Cease fire,' and stopped the ship. I signalled to the Germans to this effect; but owing to the smoke, some time passed before they could see our signals, and they continued to fire. Even as I signalled our gun went off, owing to the order 'Cease fire' not having reached our gunners. And that, of course, caused more trouble. The whole thing was over in less than fifteen minutes. . . .

"It was not until we were taken on board the raider that we ascertained the extent of her casualties. Although our shells were so small—the gun was only a six-pounder—it seems we had done a good deal of damage, and the bluejackets told us we had killed four of their crew and wounded two. When the German commander came aboard our ship he asked for the captain, and on Captain Oliver coming forward he demanded why the *Clan Mactavish* had fired on him. 'I wanted to get away, of course,' replied the captain, 'and I fired to protect my ship. My Government put a gun on board, and I used it. It wasn't put there for ornament.'"

"It was a fine fight," says Sir Edward Merewether, who watched it from the *Appam*. Finally the Germans discharged two torpedoes at the *Clan Mactavish*, and both struck home. The British ship heeled over, as if some giant had struck her a sudden blow, and in a very short time disappeared. The Germans lowered boats with all possible speed, and began to search for survivors. Four of the gallant fellows who had fought so pluckily were picked up, and the passengers on the *Appam* gave them a rousing cheer as they were brought over the side. All the others, nineteen in number, went down with the ship.

During the night the *Moewe* parted company with the *Appam*, taking with her some £50,000 of bar gold which she found on board her prize. Before she disappeared her commander ordered the British on board the *Appam* to sign a paper declaring that they would not take arms against the Germans. Several of the passengers refused, and were imprisoned on board the *Moewe* for a time, but were finally released and sent back to the *Appam*. One man who signed the paper was called up for the army on his return to England; but he pleaded that he had given a promise not to serve against the Germans, and his promise was respected.

What became of the *Moewe* we shall learn later on. Meanwhile we will follow the fortunes of the *Appam*. It was quite

clear that Lieutenant Berg could not carry the prize to a German port. If he attempted to navigate the liner towards the North Sea, she would be certain to be stopped and captured by British cruisers. He was bound to take her to some neutral port. The nearest neutral country to him was Spain ; but instead of heading towards that country he steered westward for the coast of North America. No doubt he had received instructions to take the *Appam* to the United States, in the hope that when she arrived questions might arise which would cause trouble between the United States Government and that of Great Britain. For some distance he towed the steamer *Corbridge*, but before long he transferred all her coal to the *Appam's* bunkers, and then scuttled her. A roundabout course was then made for the port of Norfolk, in Virginia.

During the voyage, which lasted sixteen days, the passengers were allowed full liberty, and were not harshly treated. Food soon ran short, and for the last three days of the voyage the bill of fare consisted only of rice, biscuits, bread, and jam. You probably wonder how Lieutenant Berg and his small crew of twenty-two were able to prevent the four hundred passengers from recapturing the ship. The passengers, you will remember, had been deprived of arms, and Lieutenant Berg plainly told them that if there was any attempt to mutiny he would blow up the ship, and send everybody on board to " kingdom come." For this purpose he had placed explosives in various parts of the vessel, and had made arrangements to fire them by electricity. This threat was sufficient to put an end to all thoughts of overcoming the German guard.

It is supposed that Lieutenant Berg intended to stay out of port as long as his coal and oil lasted ; but he was prevented from making a long cruise by the men in the stoke-hole, who every day threw many tons of unburnt coal into the sea along with the ashes. " You can trace the course of the *Appam* on the bottom of the sea," said the chief engineer, " by the steady line of black coal ; and if friend Berg cares to look into the bilge of the ship, he will find there enough oil to have lasted her engines a month."

Early on the morning of 1st February the *Appam* dropped anchor in Hampton Roads. At once Lieutenant Berg sent off the following telegram to the German Ambassador at Washington :—

"I have the honour to report that I arrived at Hampton Roads with the prize ship *Appam*, the British liner. I have on board 400 passengers, among them the Governor of Sierra Leone (Sir Edward Merewether), many sacks of mails, and 3,000 tons of goods.—BERG."

The rest of the story is soon told. The Government of the United States ordered the vessel to be interned as a German prize until the end of the war, but refused to make prisoners of the British subjects on board; and, greatly to Lieutenant Berg's surprise, would not allow him and his prize crew to go free. The *Appam's* passengers and crew returned to England shortly afterwards.

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Now we must return to the *Moewe*. After she parted company with the *Appam* nothing definite was heard of her until 5th March, when the Germans issued a statement announcing that she had arrived safely at a certain German port (Kiel) on the previous day, after a successful cruise lasting several months, and that she had brought with her four British officers, twenty-nine British marines and sailors, and 166 men, crews of enemy steamers, as well as £50,000 in gold bars. She claimed to have captured in all fourteen ships, with a total tonnage of over 58,000. As you may imagine, the Germans were hugely delighted; and the Kaiser at once decorated the whole crew with the Iron Cross.

The success of the *Moewe* proved that a disguised ship, given good luck, could elude our patrols. The history of all blockades abounds with similar instances. The sea is so wide, and the obscurity of darkness or fog is so great, that no patrols can possibly keep all raiders from breaking through. It was, however, a desperate adventure, and we will not begrudge the German captain a full meed of praise for the skill and courage which he displayed. The incident only served to stimulate our navy to increased watchfulness.

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One of the *Appam's* officers learned from the Germans who had seized his vessel that six other ships were being fitted out in the Kiel Canal, and that one by one they were going to try to slip past the British patrols and prey on Allied shipping. The story was probably true, for, on 29th February, H.M.

armed merchant cruiser *Alcantara* sighted what looked like a Norwegian merchantman steering for the Atlantic between the Shetlands and the Faroes. She had the Norwegian colours painted on her side, and it was noticed that at one time she had two funnels, at another three, and on another occasion only one. So suspicious were her movements that the *Alcantara* closed up with her, and, when 800 yards away, signalled, "I am going to board you." The answer was, "I am a peaceful merchantman flying the Norwegian flag."

Thereupon the captain of the *Alcantara* ordered a boat to be lowered, and as this was being done the *Moewe* trick was repeated, and the "peaceful merchantman" suddenly became the fighting cruiser *Greif*. At once she discharged three torpedoes at the *Alcantara*, two of which hit her, and caused great havoc on board. Although the British gunners were surrounded by wounded men and the ship was doomed, they opened fire with great gallantry, and for ten minutes fought a fierce duel with the German raider. Then the British vessel heeled over and sank.

After the *Alcantara* had been hit, one of her consorts, the *Andes*, appeared, and took part in the fight. The German raider fired more torpedoes, but the *Andes* evaded them, and her shells swept the decks of the enemy. The German was already beaten when the British light cruiser *Comus*, attracted by the sound of firing, appeared on the scene. Again and again her gunners hit the German vessel, but even before they opened fire she was done for, and soon afterwards blew up with a loud explosion. At once the work of rescue began, and five German officers and 115 men out of a total complement of probably over 300 were picked up and made prisoners. Our own loss was five officers and sixty-nine men.

The Duel to the Death between the "Alcantara" and the "Greif."

(*From the picture by Charles Pears. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

Our illustration shows the final scene. The *Alcantara* is on the left, the *Greif* on the right. The latter was sunk by gun-fire, and the former by torpedoes.

Camel Steeplechase at Windhoek, Capital of German South-West Africa.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOYALISTS AND TRAITORS.

ON the first day of the year 1916 the news of an African success came to us like a ray of sunshine in the prevailing gloom. The capital of the German colony of Kamerun had surrendered. Already Togoland and German South-West Africa had been captured, and the Kaiser's overseas empire was now reduced to wellnigh one-third of its former extent. In our fourth volume * I mentioned the campaign which gave us German South-West Africa, and promised that, later on, I would tell you the story of its conquest. In the next chapter I will keep my promise.

When the Germans were planning the great adventure which was to give them the mastery of the world, they convinced themselves that Great Britain was a decaying power, unable and unwilling to engage in a European struggle. They felt sure that our empire, though it appeared solid and enduring, was rotten at the core, and that if Britain was threatened with war it would fall to pieces. To make assurance doubly sure, they sent their agents into all parts of the empire where there was a chance of stirring up strife, and waited for rebellion to break out, east, west, north, and south. To their amazement the empire as a whole stood firm. Only in South Africa and in Ireland were there outbreaks that led to fighting, and these rebellions, hopeless from the first, were soon sup-

* See p. 322.

pressed. The great bulk of the peoples in the British Empire proved themselves to be thoroughly loyal. Even if they had grievances against Great Britain, they preferred her honest and just rule to the bullying, overbearing government of the Germans, whose treatment of subject races has always been marked by violence and contempt.

The Germans were confident that there would be a serious outbreak in British South Africa. Less than fifteen years had elapsed since the Boers, secretly helped and encouraged by the Germans, had begun a long and bitter war against us. The Kaiser and his Ministers believed that the Boers still hated us, and that when the European war began they would eagerly seize the opportunity to throw off the British yoke. They did not know that time had worked wonders, and that a great change had come over the feelings of the Dutch. They did not realize that Britain's just and generous treatment had banished much of the old enmity, and had reconciled most of the Boers to the idea of living peaceably under the Union Jack. In 1906 the British Government had said to the Boers, "Now that you are under the British flag, take the rights of white men and govern yourselves." Thus it came about that Boer generals who were fighting against us in 1902 became Ministers of the British Crown and rulers of British territory four years later. Some people in Britain thought that this grant of self-government was a very dangerous experiment; but, as you will see, it justified itself.

General Louis Botha, Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa.

In 1910 the four states of South Africa came together and formed a union. It was clear to all far-seeing men that they were not strong enough to stand alone; their railways formed one system, and their interests were closely linked together. Most South Africans by this time had realized the truth of the old proverb, "United we stand, divided we fall." They therefore agreed to unite, and to set up one Government and one Parliament, which should act for all. The first Prime Minister of United South Africa was General Botha, the ablest of all the Dutch soldiers who had fought against us in the Boer War. He was a true patriot; he loved South Africa dearly, but he saw that she had no future save as a part of the British Empire. Without abating one jot of his affection for South Africa, he threw in his lot with the empire, and set himself to win over those Boers who still resented and disliked British rule. In this work he was greatly assisted by another Boer general—Smuts, a man who had won fame alike as a scholar, a lawyer, and a commander in the field. Britain had good cause to rejoice that these two great men were at the head of affairs in South Africa when the war began.

On August 7, 1914, the British Government informed General Botha that if the South African Government were to seize such parts of German South-West Africa as would give it command of Swakopmund, Luderitz Bay, and the wireless stations at these places, it would be doing a great and urgent service to the empire. On 10th August General Botha replied that South Africa would supply the land forces for such a venture if Great Britain would provide ships and sailors. This was agreed to, and on 9th September General Botha announced in the Union Parliament that the Government had decided to carry the war into German territory, "in the interests of South Africa as well as of the empire." Parliament supported the Prime Minister by 91 votes to 12, the opposition being led by General Hertzog, who made a very bitter speech against the proposal. Hertzog was the leader of the old, slow-going, anti-British Boers, and he had recently been dismissed by Botha from the Ministry.

There were several other Boer leaders who were disloyal. One of them was General Beyers, a born soldier, who had won fame by his handling of the guns during the Boer War. He had visited Germany, and the Kaiser had paid him such great

attention that his head had been turned. When the grant of self-government was given to the Transvaal he became Speaker of its Parliament, but, to his chagrin, had not been appointed to the same post in the Union Parliament. He had never forgiven Botha and Smuts for leaving him in the lurch and supporting another candidate. In order to appease him, he had been made Commandant-General of the Active Citizen Force; but this did not satisfy him. He still cherished enmity against his old friends, and was ready to do them all the mischief he could. Then there was De Wet, who gave us so much trouble during the Boer War. Then he had played hide-and-seek with the British columns; he had broken through our lines time after time, and had never been caught. He was fifteen years older now, and had lost much of his former activity. His feats during the Boer War had made him something of a hero. In reality he was a savage, coarse, unlettered man. He still bitterly hated the British, and was eager to restore the old Boer government.

Christian Rudolf de Wet.

Beyers had insisted on appointing, as lieutenant-colonel in command of the border between British South Africa and

German South-West Africa, a man named Maritz, who had already served with the Germans, and was known to be in close touch with them. Both Beyers and Maritz were traitors : they had already plotted with the enemy, and had agreed that on the outbreak of war they would raise the standard of rebellion and set up a South African republic. As Commandant-General of the Union forces Beyers was called upon to make arrangements for carrying the war into German territory. He knew all the secret plans of the Government, and he played a double game until he thought the time was ripe for open rebellion.

Botha knew well that there were many disloyal men in the country, and that German agents had been busy stirring up the anti-British Boers ; but he knew, too, that the great majority of South Africans would gladly follow his lead. There was great enthusiasm when he announced that he would command the Union troops in person, and men at once flocked to his banner. There was little or no difficulty in procuring recruits ; the difficulty was in refusing them. Magistrates, employers of labour, lawyers, schoolmasters, men of every rank and station, begged to be allowed to enlist, if only in the ranks. It is said that when Botha was raising troops he called up thirty-five officers who had served with him in the Boer War, and told them that he wanted fifteen of them to join him. He left them for five minutes to talk the matter over. When he returned their spokesman simply said, " Take the fifteen you want ; the rest of us intend to go anyway as privates." In a very short time 7,000 men—5,000 foot and 2,000 mounted infantry—were in arms.

CHAPTER IX.

REBELLION AND CONQUEST.

BEFORE I describe the campaign which was now about to begin, let me point out that, though German South-West Africa is continuous with British South Africa, an army cannot invade the one from the other by land except at two points—from the east along the lower course of the Orange River, and from the south across the strip of desert between the Port Nolloth Railway and the river. On the eastern border of German South-West Africa stretches the Kalahari Desert, which, except in very rainy seasons, is quite devoid of water. No army can cross this desert without grave risk of perishing from thirst. South of the desert, and south and east of the lower course of the Orange, there are wide, dry plains which are almost equally impossible for the advance of large bodies of horses, mules, and men. You can clearly see that German South-West Africa is best invaded from British South Africa by sea.

Port Nolloth,* you will observe, lies about fifty miles south of the mouth of the Orange River. From the port a railway of 2 feet 6 inch gauge runs inland to the copper deposits of Ookiep, 92 miles inland. It crosses country which is without a blade of green except when the rains, which come once on an average in every three years, drench it. Then flowers of the rarest hue spring up from the bare sand and carpet the barrenness with rich colour. About sixty miles from the coast on this railway stands Steinkopf, from which a forty-five mile track across a country without grazing and water leads to Raman's Drift, on the Orange River. About thirty miles to the north of Raman's Drift is Warmbad, the southern terminus of

* See Map, page 85.

Swakopmund : General View. [*Photo, The Sphere.*

Swakopmund stands in a splendid bay south of Walfish Bay, which is British territory. The harbour is poor, and the city, which is built

the German railway system. If you follow the course of the Orange River inland, you will see the station of Upington, in British Bechuanaland, and on the border line to the north-west of it the frontier post of Nakob. Now that you are clear as to the position of these places, you will be able to understand General Botha's plan of campaign.

He proposed to invade German South-West Africa with four columns—A, B, C, and D. Column A was to be carried by sea to Port Nolloth, and by rail to Steinkopf, from which place it would trek to Raman's Drift, and then fight its way north towards the capital, Windhoek, where the Germans were expected to make their great stand. B column, which was to be commanded by Maritz, the traitor, was to advance from its base at Upington to a point on the Orange River, where it was to join hands with Column A. Column C would proceed by sea to Luderitz Bay, occupy the port, and push eastwards and then northwards towards Windhoek; while Column D would land at Swakopmund, and having captured the place, would advance eastwards on the capital. All the columns, you will observe, would have the railway to help them in their advance. This plan, however, was never carried into effect, for reasons which will presently appear.

As soon as the war began the German governor, Dr. Seitz, ordered his troops to abandon Swakopmund and Luderitz Bay, and retire with all their military stores to the capital, Windhoek, some two hundred miles inland. Seitz knew well that as he could expect no help from the sea, the ports were of no use to him. His best defence was the 200 miles of sandy desert which lay between the capital and the coast. Before leaving Swakopmund he dismantled the jetty and sank the tugs in the harbour. He had probably 10,000 men and a camel corps of 500 for the defence of the colony. He was strong in artillery and machine guns, and had several aeroplanes.

As early as the 20th of August the enemy had made a number of small raids into British territory, and had fought some skirmishes with the frontier farmers. More serious fighting began when Column A, having landed at Port Nolloth, found itself ready to push forward the 4th and 5th South African Rifles towards Raman's Drift. The trek across the desert from Steinkopf was one long, hard grind through thick dust that choked and blinded man and beast. Not until thirty-three

miles of the journey had been covered was a water-hole discovered, eight miles off the line of march. Before the march could be completed the baggage animals had to trudge eight miles to this water-hole and eight miles back again. The trek was a great test of endurance both for man and beast, but it was safely accomplished. At dawn on 15th September the South African Rifles attacked the police station at Raman's Drift. All the Germans but one scuttled away at the first crack of the rifles. The German who remained was an officer, and he surrendered after killing one of our men. Patrols were sent in pursuit of the enemy, who retired inland to a strong position at Sandfontein, halfway to Warmbad.

Meanwhile, on the 17th, the Germans surprised a British post at Nakob, and left the place in charge of a small garrison. Next day Column C, which had sailed from Cape Town in four transports, accompanied by a British gunboat, landed at Luderitz Bay and occupied the town. At noon the white flag on the town hall was replaced by the Union Jack. The town was discovered to be a very unpleasing place, with no natural advantages. Some of the public buildings were imposing, and many of the houses were well furnished; but the streets were deep in loose sand. The wireless station had been destroyed, but the electricity works were intact. Luderitzbucht was taken over as a going concern. About a hundred German families had remained in it when their army retreated to Windhoek.

Now we must return to Column A, which you will remember was pushing its patrols forward in pursuit of the Germans who had been dislodged from Raman's Drift. Sandfontein, where the enemy was reported to be in strength, is a small kopje covered with huge boulders, in the midst of a sandy, cup-like plain, which can only be approached through defiles in the surrounding hills. The place is important, because it is one of the few spots where water can be obtained in this dry and thirsty land. When the British approached Sandfontein on 19th September they found it abandoned. All the pumps had been destroyed, and the bodies of dead dogs had been thrown into the wells. The British occupied the kopje, and having cleared the surrounding country, left a squadron as a garrison. This squadron was relieved on the 25th, and the newcomers, finding themselves attacked, sent for reinforce-

ments, which arrived early on the morning of the 26th. The reinforcements consisted of a squadron with two guns and about thirty men of the Transvaal Horse Artillery.

The new arrivals had hardly outspanned before clouds of

German South-West Africa.

dust were observed north, east, and south of them. Before long it was discovered that Sandfontein was being surrounded by the enemy, who were from 1,500 to 2,000 strong. Retreat was impossible, as all the defiles were occupied by the Germans.

The enemy's guns opened fire, and as the gunners knew the ranges, they did much execution. The little British force—257 officers and men all told—fought gallantly all day until their ammunition ran out, and then, having destroyed their field pieces, surrendered. The German commander was full of praise for the British; he could not believe that so stubborn a resistance had been put up by less than 300 men. Our loss was 12 killed, 40 wounded, and 205 captured.

No doubt both this disaster and that at Nakob were due to treachery. Somebody had given the enemy information as to the number and the movements of the British troops, and the Germans had thus been able to fall upon them unawares. A fortnight later it was quite clear who the traitor was. At this time Maritz was at Upington, in command of the 980 officers and men and four machine guns which were to form Column B. You will remember that he owed his appointment to Beyers. He had refused to take the oath of loyalty after the Boer War, and had become naturalized in German South-West Africa; but when the Union was formed he had returned to British territory, and had set up in business as a butcher. He was a suspected man from the first. As far back as 1913 he had been plotting with the Germans, who had promised him help and had given him money.

When Maritz was instructed to advance into German South-West Africa, he informed the Government that rather than do so he would resign. By this time he had won over many of his men, and his force could not be trusted. General Botha thereupon ordered Colonel Brits to supersede him. Brits sent a major to Maritz, ordering him to give up his command; but this Maritz refused to do. He seized the major, and kept him under arrest, but afterwards released him and sent him back with an impudent message to the Government. "Unless," he said, "General Hertzog, De Wet, Beyers, and others are allowed to come and meet me and give me their instructions by a certain date, I will invade the Union." The major further reported that Maritz had shown him telegrams from the Germans, and had told him that he held the rank of general in the German army. Maritz had German troops with him, and boasted that he had plenty of guns, rifles, ammunition, and money.

It was on 10th October that Maritz purged his force of its loyal members. By means of a trick he got all those who

had not already agreed to join him to come to his quarters unarmed, and then surrounded them with the rebel members of his band. He said that he had made a treaty with the Germans, and that in return for helping them they would give him forces to fight the British. He gave his hearers five minutes to make up their minds whether they would join him or not. Those who wished to throw in their lot with him were to take two paces forward. Five officers and fifty-eight men stood fast, including the whole of the machine-gun section. The gunnery officer, Lieutenant Freer, told Maritz plainly what he thought of him, and declared that if he had his four machine guns with him he would gladly fight the whole pack of rebels. Maritz refused this challenge, and ordered the loyal men to be made prisoners. These poor fellows suffered much for keeping faith. They were badly treated, and were in captivity for eight months, when some of them managed to escape. On 12th October Maritz proclaimed a South African Republic, with himself as President and Commander-in-Chief.

I have already told you that Maritz was to lead Column B, according to Botha's plan of campaign. His treachery threw all the plans out of gear, and compelled Botha to suspend all important operations in German South-West Africa. At once martial law was proclaimed throughout British South Africa, and Botha announced that he would lead the loyalists against the rebels. One of his friends begged him not to do so, saying that his life was too valuable to be risked. To this Botha replied, with deep emotion, that he would not ask his people to enter into armed conflict with their brethren unless he led them. The friend said that Botha had spoken nobly, and that his words ought to be taken to heart by every man in the country.

Five days after Maritz threw off the mask he was attacked by Colonel Brits. By this time the traitor had discovered that the Germans could send him no help, and that he had relied on a broken reed. In a series of fights between the 22nd and the 30th of October he was badly beaten, and his commando was hopelessly broken up. It took twenty days to smash Maritz, and in the meantime a much graver rebellion had begun.

* * * * * * *

When war broke out in Europe an old Boer pastor, who was believed by the " back-veld " Boers to be an inspired prophet,

Captured Rebels of De Wet's Commando. [*Photo, The Illustrated London News.*

Most of the rebels who joined Beyers and De Wet were "poor whites" who were landless, men who still cherished bitter memories

began to see visions and to dream dreams. He said that Germany was the appointed agent of God to purify the world, and that the Almighty had chosen Generals Delarey, Beyers, and De Wet to set up once more the South African Republic. Many of the old, slow-going, anti-British Boers firmly believed in the prophet, and were quite willing to take up arms against us. There were also large numbers of " poor whites " in the Transvaal who believed that all their troubles were due to British rule. Rebellion was diligently preached amongst the " poor whites " and the " back-veld " Boers, and before long numbers of them were ready to take up arms. There was one man who might have raised the whole of the farmers in the Western Transvaal—Delarey; but he was accidentally shot by a police patrol outside Johannesburg on the very day when Beyers, by resigning his post as Commandant-General, showed plainly that he was ready to head the rebellion.

On 24th October De Wet seized a small town in the north of the Orange State, and did other acts of war. Botha at once called upon all loyal burghers to help him to put down the revolt, and to their undying honour they responded freely to his call. From farm to farm went the summons, and when it was received many a Boer took down his Mauser, upsaddled his pony, and galloped off to the place of muster. In a few weeks more than 30,000 loyal Boers were in arms. Remember that these farmers were called upon to fight men of their own blood, some of whom had been their leaders and comrades in the Boer War.

Botha hastened northwards with all speed, and on the 27th of October fell in with the enemy about eighty miles from Pretoria. He completely routed the rebels, scattered their commandos, and took eighty prisoners. The leaders fled to the south-west. Elsewhere, however, the rebels had a success, but it was short-lived. Before long they were being hunted down in all directions. Some of them, along with Kemp, made their way towards German territory, and on 7th November General Smuts was able to announce that the rebellion was over, and that only a few scattered bands under De Wet and Beyers were holding out.

On 11th November Botha completely defeated De Wet, and two days later Beyers's rebel band was thoroughly beaten. De Wet now knew that the game was up, and with twenty-five

men he made one last dash for liberty. Probably he meant to try to push through the Kalahari Desert to join the Germans in South-West Africa ; but he had not reckoned on the swiftness of his pursuers, who followed hard after him in motor cars. On 1st December they caught him, and two days later he entered Johannesburg as a prisoner.

On 8th December, when Beyers was being driven across the Vaal, then in high flood, he found his horse failing under him, and slipped from its back into the water to swim. His great-coat hampered him, and in vain he tried to get rid of it. A companion heard him cry, "I can do no more;" and he sank. Two days later his body was discovered. Thus, by the end of December the back of the rebellion had been broken. De Wet had been captured, Beyers was dead, Kemp was across the German border, and Hertzog had saved his skin by not declaring himself. In less than two months Botha had routed the rebels at all points, and had captured 7,000 of them, while his own loss was no more than 334.

The last embers of the rebellion were stamped out in January, when the rebels, dispirited and half starving, were badly beaten in the angle formed by the Orange River and the German frontier. In their last sally they were led by Kemp and Maritz. Kemp surrendered; but Maritz, knowing that no mercy awaited him, escaped into German territory. When all was over Botha showed much mercy to his captives. The rank and file were pardoned, but the leaders were brought to trial. British South Africa was now safe from civil strife, and Botha was free to give all his attention to the campaign which he had already begun, but had been forced by the rebellion to suspend.

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I do not propose to tell you the story of the conquest of German South-West Africa in detail, for though it was a fine achievement, it was not of thrilling interest, and the real foe was not the enemy, but the climate and the desert. In fact, the campaign resolved itself into a mighty and well-engineered trek. Since September we had held Luderitz Bay, the southern terminus of the roundabout railway which swerves northwards and then eastwards to Swakopmund. During the rebellion we captured Raman's Drift and the fords of the Orange, and on 14th January transports arrived at Swakopmund, and without

much trouble took possession of the place. We thus held all the gates of the German colony, and our command of the sea gave us freedom to use them. Swakopmund was described by a correspondent as a " white city " perched on the edge of a desert, and overlooking a foreshore more adapted to surf bathing than shipping. It had many showy buildings and good shops, attractive hotels, beer gardens, cinematograph theatres, and a music hall.

General Botha, as you know, had decided on an enveloping movement against Windhoek, and for this purpose his forces

Searching for Water in the Desert. [*Photo, The Sphere.*

were divided into two main armies. The northern army, which he himself led, moved along the railway towards the capital. The southern army, under General Smuts, was divided into three columns, the first of which moved east from Luderitz Bay along the railway, the second north from Warmbad, while the third was to invade the colony from Bechuanaland. Let us follow very briefly the progress of the northern army. It began to march inland on 22nd February; but its progress was slow, for the Germans had blown up the railway, and it had to be repaired. By 5th May the northern army had driven the

enemy back on Windhoek, and all serious resistance to its progress was over.

On 1st April the column moving northwards from Raman's Drift joined hands with that which had pushed westwards from Bechuanaland; and on the 20th Keetmanshoop surrendered without fighting. General Smuts made it his headquarters, and waited there for the force which was moving inland from Luderitz Bay. This force reached a station seventy miles north of Keetmanshoop on 24th April, and all was ready for the advance of the united southern army. Four days later, the Germans were badly beaten north of Gibeon in the biggest engagement of the campaign, and the circle of steel was fast closing in on the capital. By 1st May all German South-West Africa south of Gibeon was in British hands, and Botha was rapidly advancing on the capital from the west. On 10th May the Germans sent a message to say that Windhoek would surrender. On the 12th the army entered the town, and found that the troops had withdrawn to Grootfontein, which you will see on the map at the end of the railway in the north-east of the colony. The wireless station at Windhoek was found to be intact.

On the day following the occupation a message arrived that Governor Seitz and the German military commander, Colonel Francke, desired a "conversation" with General Botha. A meeting took place, an armistice of forty-eight hours was declared, and finally, on July 8, 1915, the whole German force surrendered. The total number of prisoners taken during the last stage of the campaign was 4,740. In addition, thousands of rifles, large quantities of ammunition, twenty-two machine guns, and thirty-seven field-pieces were surrendered. The enemy had been outnumbered and outgeneralled, and, when engagements took place, outfought; and the main credit was due to General Botha, who had indeed rendered "a great and urgent service to the Empire."

The British Prime Minister well described the difficulty of the task in a speech at the Guildhall when the capture of Windhoek was announced:—

"Their undertaking has been no slight one. A force of about 30,000 men, rather over half of whom are mounted men, with guns, horses, medical stores, mules, and transports, have been conveyed overseas 500 and 700 miles, in addition to the large land force which has been operating on the

German Union frontier. All supplies—every pound of provisions for the men, much of the water for their consumption, every ton of forage for horses and mules—have had to be brought from Cape Town. All the railway material for rapid construction has also had to be brought from Cape Town, and all these men, horses, guns, supplies, and materials had to be landed at two ports, Luderitz and Walfish, at which appliances for disembarkation for such operations had not been constructed. Then there was the sandy desert veld, eighty to a hundred miles wide, which had to be covered."

None but those who have campaigned in German South-West Africa can have any idea of the scorching heat, the deep sands, and the gritty storms which prevail in these parched regions. Many of the men had to be operated on to remove sand from the glands under their tongues. Sand blew into everything, and men were forced to wear goggles to keep it out of their eyes. Hundreds of Cape boys were employed day and night in shovelling sand off the railway. The conquest of German South-West Africa was a triumph of human endurance and of organizing skill.

Imperial Light Horse skirmishing.

(By permission of the publishers of "How Botha and Smuts conquered German South-West Africa.")

CHAPTER X.

THE KAMERUN CAMPAIGN.

IN Chapter XIX. of our third volume I gave you some account of the German colony of Kamerun, which forms a rough wedge between British Nigeria and French Congo, with its apex at Lake Chad. Kamerun is a vast country, about one and a half times the size of the German Empire. German South-West Africa, you know, consists for the most part of wide, bare, waterless deserts, covered with shifting sand. Kamerun, on the other hand, is well watered and thick with vegetation. The oil palm grows freely, and in the dense forests there is a wealth of valuable timber. The colony was of great value to Germany, because it provided her with rich tropical products. She held it for thirty years, and spent much labour and vast sums of money in developing it. In two districts alone fully a million pounds was expended in planting cocoa and rubber.

On June 1, 1916, the War Office published a dispatch from Major-General Sir Charles Dobell giving an account of the operations which led to the Allied conquest of Kamerun, or, as he prefers to call it, the Cameroons. He tells us that the colony was defended by a well-led and well-trained force, plentifully supplied with machine guns, and that our conquest of the country was not by any means a triumphal march. In the early stages of the war, when our forces were insufficient to hold the posts which we captured, we suffered several reverses. In the bush country ambushes were frequently laid for our men, and many of them fell victims to concealed enemies. To add to our difficulties, sickness raged amongst the troops.

The first half of the campaign was occupied in clearing the

coasts and the borders of the enemy. When this was done, many columns marched from different points of the compass towards Yaunde, a station far in the interior, where the Germans had set up their headquarters when they were driven from Duala, the chief port. In the middle of February 1916 the campaign was practically over, and Germany had lost her most valuable African colony.

When the campaign began, early in August 1914, it was arranged that two French columns should invade the country from French Congo, while British columns entered it at several points on the frontier of Nigeria. Unhappily these movements were not successful, mainly because the forces which the Allies were able to put into the field were too small for the purpose, and because they had to advance during the rainy season in a tangled and ill-mapped country. Already the enemy had invaded Nigeria, in the hope of capturing the town of Ibi, on the Benue River, and of cutting off the British from their water route. At the post of Takum a little British garrison made a stand which recalls the heroic defence of Rorke's Drift.* There were only fifty Nigerian police and two British officers in the place; yet, though they were outnumbered by five to one, they held the blockhouses for a whole day against most determined rushes, and drove off the enemy. At nightfall the faithful blacks retired in pitch darkness and drenching rain. They had to march in single file through swamps and rivers, and for twenty-six hours were without food. Nevertheless they reached a place of safety without a single casualty.

When war broke out a British officer was in Kamerun, several hundred miles from the frontier. His friends were puzzled how to communicate with him and give him a chance of escaping to British territory. At last they sent a boy with a message. The lad travelled for many days, and fortunately reached the officer, who set off post haste for the frontier, where he was stopped by a native sentry. The man was persuaded to let the officer through, and received two shillings for his politeness. Two hours later German soldiers appeared, only to discover that the officer had escaped. They vented their rage by flogging the sentry.

About 29th August British mounted infantry captured the

* Post on the Buffalo River, Natal; scene of a heroic stand by a handful of the 24th Regiment against the Zulus on January 22, 1879.

station of Garua,* which you will find on the river Benue, about two hundred miles south of Lake Chad. Shortly afterwards they were heavily counter-attacked, and driven back to British soil with many casualties. One of the survivors said: "It was a terrible loss, and there was absolutely no glory in the whole fighting, taking place as it did in an out-of-the-way spot—5,000 miles from England—that not one person in a thousand has ever heard of." No better luck attended the other columns.

The land attack having failed, an attempt was made to carry the port of Duala from the sea. The task was entrusted to two British warships, the *Cumberland* and the *Dwarf*. An officer of the *Cumberland*, whose account † of the operations I shall follow, tells us that the river mouth divides into many deep, mangrove-bordered creeks, some of which are navigable for many miles from the coast. Owing to the many shoals in both river and creeks, a big ship such as the *Cumberland* can only approach within fourteen miles of Duala.

The *Cumberland* and the *Dwarf* left Lagos on the evening of August 29, 1914, and reached the small harbour of Victoria, to the westward of Kamerun River, on the morning of 4th September. A beautiful view of Mount Kamerun (13,000 feet) was obtained as the ships steamed towards the town. A small working-party landed and searched the town without any opposition; but next day a German officer appeared, and said that unless the British retired in thirty minutes his troops would wipe them out. As the town was surrounded by thick bushes which concealed a large number of Germans, the working-party was withdrawn. Shortly afterwards the ship's guns opened fire, and destroyed a food store which had been discovered in the town.

* See map, page 103.

† *Blackwood's Magazine*, December 1915.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CAPTURE OF DUALA AND THE CONQUEST OF KAMERUN.

HAVING ascertained that the enemy was in strength near Victoria, the *Cumberland* sailed for Lagos, and on 7th September returned to the attack, along with a flotilla of lighters and small craft capable of navigating the creeks. It was discovered that nine vessels had been scuttled by the Germans to block the fairway of the river, and divers had to descend and blow them up before the channel was clear. While these operations were going on, the Germans attempted to sink other vessels, but the gunboat *Dwarf* was able to prevent them.

"The Germans undoubtedly thought at this time that this barrier would prevent anything larger than the *Dwarf* from getting within range of Duala. They knew, however, that she could do so, as she had proved it two days previously [when she had pushed up to Doctor Point,* where the Channel was mined, and had come within range of the battery at Yoss Point]. They, therefore, decided to destroy her by torpedo. A steamboat was fitted with two vertical spars secured over the bows and projecting to a depth of 12 feet. A bracket, capable of being slid up and down the spars, carried two flasks (used for making soda-water), about 6 feet long and 4 inches in diameter, filled with dynamite. The flasks, when in position, were parallel to the fore and aft line of the boat, and were fitted with pistols carrying detonators arranged to act when they struck their target. This is how they were to be used: A full head of steam was to be raised in the steamboat, while a second boat went ahead to the off-side of the *Dwarf* to show a light by which to steer; a third was to remain handy to pick up the brave who, having set the tiller of the steamboat to hit the *Dwarf*, was to jump overboard in time to be clear of the explosion. What really happened was that the man jumped overboard *before* the tiller had been set and when some distance from the target. The boat that was to pick him up found more pressing work to do when the *Dwarf* opened fire on the boat showing a light, so that the attack was in no way a success; and the 'torpedo' having missed by 400 yards, cruised about until the steam

* See map, page 99.

died down, when it drifted on to a mud bank, whence it was rescued by the *Dwarf* in the morning. The 'torpedo' was removed, and thereafter the steamboat became a valuable addition to the flotilla. The man who had been entrusted with the aiming of this infernal machine swam to one of the sunken vessels, from which he was rescued in the morning. When questioned, he said he was a missionary, trying 'to do his bit.' Rumour has it that he is doing it as a prisoner at Dahomey." *

By this time it was clear that all the creeks would have to be cleared of the enemy before any advance could be made. Many little fights took place in the narrow waterways, and in one of them a British picket boat actually attacked a German armed merchantman, and put three shells into her hull. The picket boat was chased, but the merchantman retired as soon as she sighted the *Cumberland* at the mouth of the river. The *Dwarf* went in pursuit of her, and in the network of creeks the two ships suddenly found themselves within fifty yards of each other, the German coming down stream and the *Dwarf* going up. The creek was narrow, and the *Dwarf* could not turn, so she opened fire, and went full steam ahead, in the hope of ramming the German vessel. Her first shot blew the enemy's foremost gun and crew into the water, and a few minutes later she crashed into the enemy. All the Germans who had not been killed jumped overboard, and the vessel was last seen blazing furiously and drifting seawards. The four guns of the *Dwarf* had poured shot into her from a range of ten yards! About a dozen Germans were killed; but the *Dwarf's* casualties were nil, though she had a clean cut along her side from the upper deck to six feet below the water line. In a week, however, she was repaired, and ready for more adventures.

Other craft now took up the work of creek fighting. Sometimes these boats had to anchor at night within a few yards of the dense mangroves on the banks, and the men on board listened to the trumpeting of elephants and the squealing of monkeys, or glanced over the side to see the snaky forms of crocodiles cleaving the surface of the water. By 24th September the river had been cleared up to Yoss Point: the enemy had been driven from the lower creeks, and the barrier across the fairway of the river had been blasted through. The previous day the cruiser *Challenger* had arrived with six transports, carrying 3,500 native troops under white officers. Most of these

* French colony on the Guinea coast of Africa.

men had been trained to bush fighting, and as they had to proceed through forest tracks they were accompanied by 3,000 carriers. French transports with 4,000 Senegalese appeared next day, and soon all was ready for the attack on Duala.

The *Challenger* managed to push up the river to within ten thousand yards of the town, and the *Dwarf* advanced still nearer. Before the ships opened fire a messenger with a white flag was sent to the governor, demanding the surrender of the place, and giving him two hours in which to prepare an answer and to withdraw the women and children if he intended to resist.

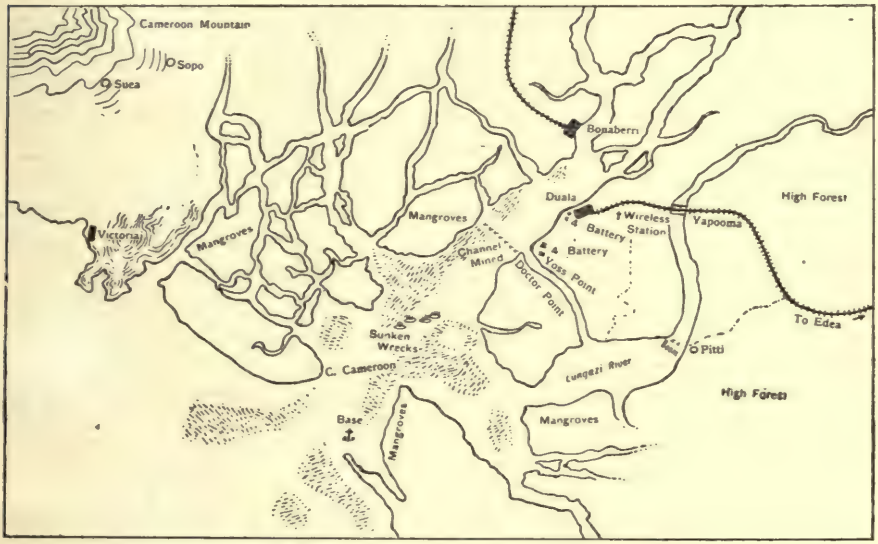


Chart of the Mouth of the Kamerun River.

While the *Challenger* and the *Dwarf* were flying the white flag at their mastheads, the Germans sent a number of floating mines down the swiftly flowing current, in the hope of destroying the ships. Our bluejackets, however, lined the bulwarks with machine guns and rifles, and exploded the mines before they could do any damage. At the end of two hours the Germans returned an answer which was only meant to gain time. So the day passed, and the bombardment had to be postponed until next morning.

At dawn on the morrow the *Challenger* opened fire, but only on special parts of the town, because it was hoped to

occupy the chief buildings as general headquarters for future operations. At ten in the morning the roar of a heavy explosion was heard. The Germans had blown up the wireless station. Half an hour later the place surrendered. Meanwhile the German troops had got away. As soon as the mines were cleared from the deep channel the *Challenger* steamed up and anchored off the town.

It was not only the *Challenger's* bombardment which brought about the rapid surrender of Duala. An attempt had been made to land troops on the bank of the Lungazi River, directly south of the town. Only a few of the men were put ashore, and the transport conveying them ran aground. Nevertheless, when the Germans learned that the Allies were landing forces, and were threatening their only line of retreat, they made haste to give up the place and get their forces away. Gunboats were pushed up the creek in order to cut off the German retreat, but they found themselves brought to a standstill by a boom a short distance below Pitti. The enemy got away by the railway which runs eastwards from Duala. As soon as the trains were across the Lungazi River the Germans blew up the bridge.

On 28th September our troops were sent up to Duala, and the Headquarters Staff was installed in Government House, which had only been slightly damaged by the bombardment. The Tricolour and the Union Jack were hoisted together at the flagstaff, and the capital of the Kameruns passed into the hands of the Allies.

* * * * * * *

The Allies had now gained a foothold in Kamerun, and were in a position to push into the interior; but neither the climate nor the character of the country favoured their advance. The rain fell in torrents for days at a time; there were no roads or even paths; the country was covered with the densest African forest. Had it not been for the two railways which run, the one to the north and the other to the east from Duala, little or no progress could have been made.

The column which advanced along the northern railway suffered a repulse, but was afterwards able to push on, and by 10th December had reached the railhead, where two aeroplanes, which had not yet been unpacked, were captured. Good progress was made along the midland railway, and by the end of January 1916 a goodly strip of the country was in our

hands. By this time French and Belgian troops had begun to make their presence felt on the borders, and all that was valuable to the Germans in Kamerun had been lost. The wireless station had been destroyed, the coasts were ours, and the German troops were preparing to make a last stand at Yaunde, about one hundred and twenty miles east of Duala.

In March 1915 the French and British generals met at Duala to make arrangements for a joint advance on Yaunde, now the German headquarters. By 1st May the British and French columns were at a place about sixty miles east of Duala, and a

A Flotilla on the River. [*Photo, The Sphere.*

little more than that distance from Yaunde. In front of them was thick bush where, at every turn of the road, machine guns lay in ambush. The enemy fought stubbornly, and threatened our line of communications, while sickness played havoc in our ranks. The advance on Yaunde failed, and our troops fell back to the line of the Kele River.

Nothing more was attempted until October; but during the interval a plan was made to finish off the conquest of the country. French troops at the point marked A on the south-eastern border * were to move in the direction of the arrow

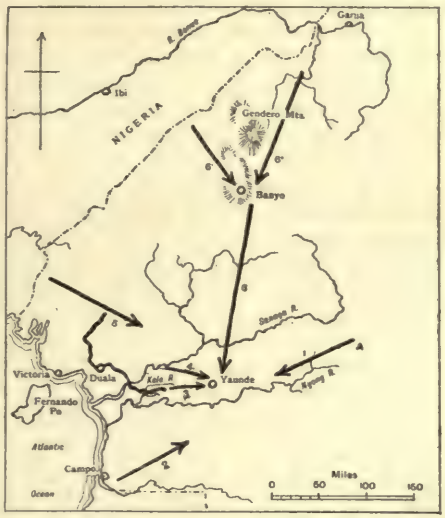
* See map, p. 103.

Assembling a Column of Native Soldiers and Bearers.

(*Photo, The Sphere.*)

This picture gives some idea of the great difficulties encountered in the conquest of Kamerun. In the background you notice the dense tropical forest, which is only traversed by a few tracks. Pioneers must precede an army operating in this region, and hew and track out a road before an advance can be made. Every pound of supplies and all the ammunition must be carried on the heads of natives. Consequently the army of carriers must be almost as large as the army of fighters. Progress through the forest is bound to be slow as well as dangerous. Snipers lurk in the undergrowth, and machine guns are installed under dense cover so as to sweep the tracks by which the army advances. During the fighting in the forest region ambushes were frequent, and the Allies lost many men. Further, the rotting vegetation and the damp fetid air caused great sickness amongst the troops. Had it not been for the rivers and the railways, the conquest of Kamerun could hardly have been undertaken with any hope of success. A few of our Nigerian troops are shown on the right of the picture. Many of these men are Hausas, belonging to the most intelligent and enterprising of West African tribes. They have long had a form of writing of their own, and books of poems, riddles, history, law, etc. They teach their children to read and write. Many of them are Mohammedans, but others remain heathen. Their speech is understood by most tribes in the central and western Sudan. For generations they have mined iron, tin, lead, silver, and salt; they are excellent farmers, keen traders, and expert at cotton spinning, weaving, and dyeing. Though peaceful by nature they are very strong, brave, and cool. As early as 1874 they fought as allies of the British (in the Ashanti campaign). The Hausa makes an excellent policeman and soldier. He is said to be "as incorruptible as an English judge."

marked 1, while a force was landed at Campo, and was to march in the direction of the arrow marked 2. Other columns were to close in upon Yaunde in the direction of the arrows marked 3 and 4, and meanwhile an advance was made on Banyo by two columns starting from the Nigerian frontier (6^1 and 6^2). A Belgian column also invaded the country from the Congo, and a force (5) cleared the country round the northern railhead.



An officer who accompanied column 6^2 advancing on Banyo tells us that he and his comrades climbed to the plateau on which the town stands by steep, narrow paths, and that on the crest they discovered a strong position which the enemy had abandoned. The next few days' advance was across open rolling grass lands, quite uninhabited. The enemy took up positions on kopjes, but were easily driven from their strongholds. When near Banyo the two columns came into touch, and on 24th October they entered the town, from which the garrison had withdrawn to the top of a steep mountain amidst a range of hills three miles away. From Banyo this position looked very strong indeed. It fairly bristled with rocky boulders and strongly-built "sangars." *

"We commenced our attack on the mountain early on the morning of 4th November. The infantry, advancing from four different directions, covered by the fire from our three guns, worked their way up slowly and doggedly, foot by foot, climbing over rocks and tearing their way through the thorny scrub and the long grass under a heavy rifle and Maxim-gun fire from the enemy's sangars and concealed snipers amongst the rocks. By the evening most of the companies had managed to struggle halfway up the hill, getting what shelter they could from the incessant fire of the enemy, which was aided by fireballs and rockets. Officers and men, exhausted, and drenched with rain, hung on to the ground gained. At dawn on the morning of the 5th they started climbing once more, splendidly led and commanded by their company and section commanders.

* An Indian term for low walls of loose stones, used as cover.

"Our troops having got directly under the first line of sangars, the enemy, in addition to rifle and Maxim-gun fire, started rolling down rocks and throwing dynamite bombs. . . . All that day our men gradually worked their way up, capturing a small stone redoubt and a sangar here and there. . . .

"Darkness set in early that evening. At 5 p.m. heavy clouds rolled up from the west, and an hour or two later a terrific thunderstorm burst over the mountain. Heavy firing and the explosion of bombs and fireballs still continued. There seemed reason to fear that, owing to the exhaustion of our men from the want of sleep and violent physical effort, they would never succeed.

"A misty morning prevented our seeing what was happening as dawn broke on the morning of the 6th, but as only scattered firing was going on success seemed assured; and sure enough, as the mist dispersed, a white flag could be seen on the top of the hill and our men standing out against the sky-line. It had been a dour and stubborn fight. The Germans occupying such a strong and well-prepared position, had put up a strong resistance, and contested every yard of ground. Our men, however, would not be denied. They fought magnificently. The people of Nigeria ought to feel proud in producing such good soldiers, as it was a task which would have tried the finest troops in the world."

On the top of the mountain the victorious troops saw a strange scene. Scattered in all directions were broken furniture, burst trunks, tin boxes, blankets, bedding, clothes, broken bottles of wine and beer, smashed-up rifles, gramophones, telephones, and a hundred other things, in the utmost confusion. Within this hill-stronghold the Germans had built several good mud houses with glass doors and windows, furniture, carpets, pictures, etc. Signposts showed the way to the defensive posts; there were two fine cement reservoirs of water, a vegetable garden, and caves filled with mealies and corn. Cattle, pigs, sheep, and fowls were feeding hard by, and it was clear that the Germans thought they could hold the position for any length of time. The capture of this eyrie was a feather in the caps of the Nigerian troops, and when they were paraded on 7th November "it was a real pleasure to see their black, grinning faces and hear them cheering."

By 26th November the French, advancing along the arrow marked 3, were within forty miles of Yaunde; and on 17th December our troops, advancing along the arrow marked 4, had left the tangled forest region behind, and were in open country. Thenceforth they pushed forward on a wide front, and the enemy, knowing that spearheads were being thrust against him on all sides, began to lose heart and give way.

Meanwhile the columns which had captured Banyo had marched south for 160 miles, and had joined hands with the column moving along the arrow marked 4.

Yaunde was now doomed. Harried on all sides, the enemy completely broke, and all real resistance was over. On New Year's Day, 1916, the French entered Yaunde, and before long the flags of France, Britain, and Belgium were flying above the town. During the following week allied troops from all points of the compass began to arrive. A very remarkable feat had been performed. Widely separated columns, that had

German Troops in Banyo.
(*Photo, The Illustrated London News.*)

fought and marched for a period of seventeen months, had converged upon Yaunde within a few days of each other. Despite the roadless country, the swampy marshes, the dense forests, the difficulties of transport, the great heat, and the sickness that always besets troops in the tropics, all the columns, some of them beginning their march from points separated by five hundred miles, met at the point to be attacked almost at the same time. Probably never before in the history of warfare has a combined movement of this character been so well timed and so successfully carried through.

The Germans who retreated from Yaunde were followed

up; but most of them, along with the governor, managed to escape into Spanish territory,* where they were disarmed and interned. In the middle of February 1916 the only Germans in Kamerun were perched on a lofty mountain in the far north, where they were closely besieged and cut off from the outer world. Before the end of the month they yielded, and the conquest of the colony was complete.

* * * * * * *

Only one Victoria Cross was awarded during the campaign which gave us Kamerun. It was won by

Captain John Fitzhardinge Paul Butler, the King's Royal Rifle Corps, attached Pioneer Company, Gold Coast Regiment, West African Frontier Force.

On November 17, 1914, Captain Butler, with a party of thirteen men, pushed into the thick bush and attacked the enemy, who numbered about one hundred, and were armed with a machine gun. He and his followers scattered the troops opposed to them, and captured the machine gun, together with many loads of ammunition. Again, on 27th December, Captain Butler exhibited remarkable courage. The Ekkam River was held by the Germans, and it was important that the position and strength of the enemy should be ascertained. Captain Butler went out for the purpose with a few men and, all alone, swam the river. In the face of a brisk fire he managed to reach the farther bank, and creep sufficiently near to the enemy to find out where and in what strength he was posted. The gallant captain returned in safety, but two of his men were wounded while he was in the water.

* * * * * * *

You have now heard how German South-West Africa and Kamerun were lost to Germany. In February 1916 the only remaining colony in which the enemy could show fight was German East Africa, which had been first attacked as far back as August 13, 1914. I shall not now describe the fighting in East Africa, but shall postpone my account of the campaign until I can tell you the whole story.

* Late in June 1916 the Kaiser sent a submarine to Cartagena with a letter of gushing thanks to the King of Spain for the manner in which German refugees from Kamerun had been received in Spanish African territory.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ADVANCE ON ERZERUM.

IT is a far cry from Kamerun to Armenia—from the fetid breath of mangrove swamps and the clammy heat of tropical forests to the deep snow and piercing blizzards of sterile uplands, "where winter lingering chills the lap of May." In Chapter XXXII. of our third volume I described the fierce fighting which took place on the borders of this region during November and December 1914 and January 1915. You will remember that the Turks then invaded Transcaucasia, and made a desperate attempt in the depth of winter to reach the Russian fortress of Kars. Our ally dealt with the Turkish columns one by one, and flung them from the country with great slaughter. Transcaucasia was entirely cleared of the enemy, and the remnants sought refuge in the fortress of Erzerum, the central city of the Armenian plateau.

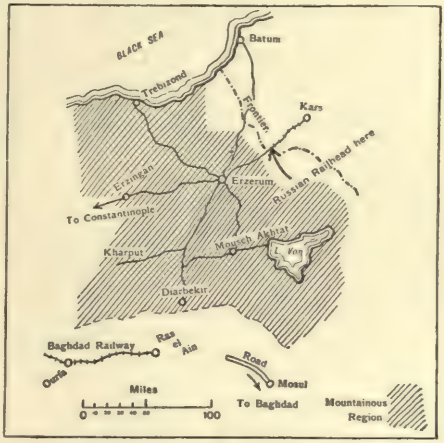
A year later, again in the depth of winter, this region became the scene of a struggle which ended in a great Russian success. Russian and Turk had now changed parts: the defenders of 1915 were the attackers of 1916. The Russians swept across the frontier, and, as you will learn, wrested from the enemy not only Erzerum, his most important stronghold in Asia Minor, but Trebizond, the sea-gate of that fortress, and pushed south to within two hundred and fifty miles of the British forces on the Tigris.

Erzerum stands 6,000 feet above sea level, in a sort of flat pocket of ground amidst lofty hills which hem it in on the north, north-east, and south. All travellers must enter the city by one or other of five roads. One of these roads, running to the north-east, pierces the mountains by means of a deep gorge, and leads past Olty to the Black Sea port of Batum.

The City of Erzerum. [*Photo, Exclusive News Agency.*

Erzerum stands about seventy miles from the Russian railhead at Sarikamish. Its citadel was founded in the fifth century, and formerly it was an important caravan centre. It fell into Turkish hands in 1517, but became Russian in 1829. In 1878 it was restored to Turkey by the Treaty of Berlin.

Another road strikes north-west, and after crossing three passes, one of them 8,000 feet in height, comes to an end in the Turkish port of Trebizond. It was at Trebizond that Xenophon* and the Ten Thousand joyfully saw the sea after the terrible trials of their retreat across the snowy ranges of Armenia. The distance from Trebizond to Erzerum is 200 miles, and a week of fine weather is necessary for the journey. The third of the roads running northwards from Erzerum crosses a pass called the "Camel's Neck," † and runs to the Russian railhead of Sarikamish, some seventy miles away. This road is by far the best of all the roads which lead to Erzerum. The "Camel's Neck," which lies a few miles to the east of the city, is only a few hundred feet higher than the pocket in which Erzerum stands. Southwards from Erzerum runs a road which forks into two—the more easterly leading to Mush, on the Eastern Euphrates; the other to Diarbekr, which is only fifty miles from the Baghdad railway.



Map showing Roads which meet at Erzerum.

Now that you know something of the situation of Erzerum, you can easily understand that in ancient times it was a most important trading centre and the avenue through which western Asia Minor communicated not only with Persia and Mesopotamia, but with Transcaucasia. The Transcaucasian railway on the north and the Baghdad railway on the south have robbed it of much of its trade; but it is still an important centre, and before the war was considered to be the strongest fortress in the Turkish Empire. At the beginning of the year 1916 three

* Xenophon was a Greek who (401 B.C.), with 10,000 others, joined Cyrus the Younger in his attempt to overpower his brother and seat himself on the throne of Persia. Cyrus was routed and slain at Cunaxa on the Euphrates, and the Greeks under Xenophon made a wonderful retreat to the coast of the Black Sea at Trebizond. Xenophon tells the story in his *Anabasis*.

† Marked on the map (p. 112) *Deve Boyun*.

gaps in the hills on the eastern side of the city—the gorge through which passes the road to Olty ; the " Camel's Neck," over which runs the road to Sarikamish ; and the break in the line of high crests through which the road to Mush proceeds southwards—were all commanded by strong forts. The Turks declared that they had 1,030 heavy guns and 200 lighter pieces in position round Erzerum. It is doubtful, however, whether they had any of the largest Krupp or Skoda guns.

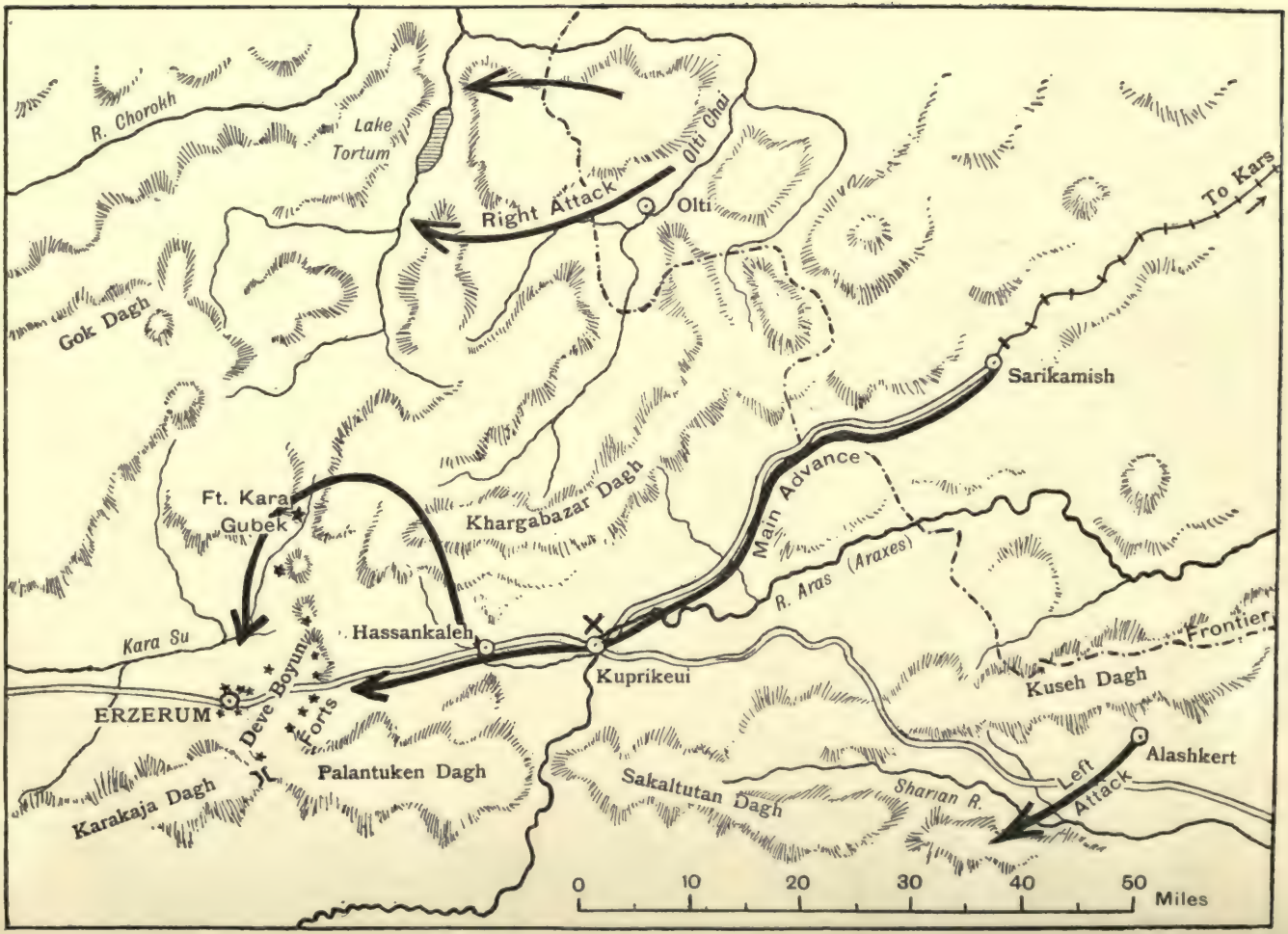
The great weakness of Erzerum as a fortress lies in its long and broken communications with its main base at Constantinople. A convoy of munitions or supplies starting from the shores of the Bosphorus must travel for two days by rail to the nearest railhead at Angora. Then it must proceed by road for 440 miles. It would thus take at the very least three weeks to reach Erzerum. The usual route was by sea to Trebizond, and then by road to the city ; but as the Russians were now in command of the Black Sea, the Turks dared not send munitions and supplies by ship. Up to the end of February 1916 the Russian light cruisers and torpedo boats had sunk some 4,000 Turkish vessels in the Black Sea. The sea route was therefore impossible, and the land route alone was available. As the Turks were short of rolling stock, and the roads were deep with the snows of midwinter, they had the greatest difficulty in providing Erzerum with the ammunition and other supplies necessary for it to sustain a siege. The Russians were in a much more favourable position. By means of the Transcaucasian railway they could bring troops, guns, and munitions from their bases to within seventy miles of the fortress which they were now about to attack.

When the Tsar placed himself at the head of the Russian armies in September 1915, he appointed the Grand Duke Nicholas, the former commander-in-chief, Viceroy of the Caucasus. Nicholas reinforced the Russian army on the Turkish border, and brought it up to a strength of about 180,000 men. The Turks at this time could not muster more than 150,000. Since the beginning of winter the Grand Duke had been making preparations for an advance, but it is probable that he did not intend to move until spring. He struck, however, before his time, and for the following reason. Early in January, you will remember, the Allies finally left the Gallipoli peninsula, and by so doing released five Turkish corps for

service elsewhere. It was thought probable that the greater number of these troops would be sent to the Caucasus, but they could not arrive for at least six weeks. The Grand Duke therefore resolved to strike before the enemy's forces could be strengthened.

It was a bold resolve, for winter campaigning on the lofty uplands of Armenia is a terrible trial of endurance. The thermometer is always far below freezing-point, the roads are blocked with snow, avalanches are frequent on the mountains, and the blizzards are perhaps more to be feared than artillery fire. The people of the country still shelter themselves from the winter storms and biting cold by living in deep pits, just as they did in the days of Xenophon. There was only one advantage to be gained by a winter attack: the enemy might be taken by surprise. On the other hand, the forces of nature alone might bring about a Russian defeat.

The Russians began their movement on the 11th of January. They advanced on a broad front on both sides of the road from the railhead at Sarikamish to Erzerum, and the Turks were obliged to fall back to avoid being enveloped. The movement was greatly impeded by snowstorms, which formed drifts up to the height of a man's waist. On the 16th the centre reached the village (marked X on the map, page 112) which commands the bridge crossing the river Araxes. Then began a fierce battle, which lasted two days. The Turks held the village and the bridgehead with machine guns, and the Russians were checked; but on the evening of the 18th, in the midst of a blinding snowstorm, they carried the position. The village was captured in the early hours of the morning, and three Turkish divisions were driven in utter rout towards Erzerum, only thirty-three miles away. The Turks fled pell-mell over the snowy mountains, throwing away their arms and equipment, and leaving behind them large quantities of stores. Erzerum was lost at the battle of the Araxes crossing.



Map to illustrate the Advance on Erzerum.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FALL OF ERZERUM AND THE CAPTURE OF TREBIZOND.

WHILE the Turks were fleeing from the Araxes to the shelter of Erzerum the Russians won another success. Their cruisers in the Black Sea sank 163 Turkish sailing ships, 73 of which were laden with provisions. On 22nd January they sent 40 more vessels to the bottom. Thus Erzerum was deprived of munitions and supplies at the very moment when the Russians were closing in upon it.

The plight of the retreating Turks was awful. The pursuing Cossacks followed them up relentlessly. Often they passed on the road hundreds of broken and weary men huddled together and sleeping in the snow. When engaged in rounding up the fugitives they frequently found dozens of them frozen to death. It was a mob of dazed, numbed, and half-starved men, rather than an army, that gathered behind the Camel's Neck for a last stand.

By the 20th January the Russians were at the gates of the fortress, and were preparing to assault the Camel's Neck. The speed of their advance was amazing. Three days after the collapse of the Turks at the Araxes, Russian guns were battering at the outer forts of the city. The policy of General Yudenitch, who commanded the army, was to give the enemy no time to rally or to take up new defensive positions. Turkish reinforcements were on the way, but he hoped to capture the city long before they could arrive.

From 26th January to 12th February the Russians waited for their heavy guns and the necessary ammunition to arrive. Meanwhile their field guns were busy bombarding the forts. On the 10th, when the thermometer was fifty degrees below zero, a Russian column pushed through the deep snow and

reached the fort of Kara Gubek, the extreme north-eastern point of the Erzerum defences. Mr. Seppings-Wright, whose picture of the incident appears on page 120–121, says :—

"This fort is the key to the whole system of the outer defences of the city of Erzerum. There are fifteen other forts, but none of such supreme importance as Kara Gubek. The assault was carried out by Caucasian and Siberian troops, all hardened by the winters of the North. Few other troops in the world could have faced such conditions, and their success deserves to rank as one of the greatest feats of the war. . . . Steadily and surely the Russian army forged their way—storming the plateaus, chasing the enemy over glaciers until the final rush was made. Up the last barrier they climbed knee-deep in snowdrifts, the icy wind burning and blistering their faces like the blast from a furnace. The cries of men and the sighs of the tired animals, mingling with the sharp clap of shrapnel, made the strangest chorus ever heard. It was repeated a thousand times among the tremendous precipices of that weird land. . . . No roads helped the advance. From the summit of a high ridge Erzerum, the goal, was seen, and was greeted with loud shouts. As the armies assembled on the crest, the order was given to charge down. Then occurred the most extraordinary spectacle—an army sliding down the smooth slopes until the mountain side was lined as though with innumerable toboggan runs. Crowning the summit of a mountain opposite stood the great fortress of Kara Gubek, the ramparts lined with Turks. Banners with the Crescent and Star streamed in the wind, but the defenders were about to meet their doom. Small parties of Russian engineers had been at work digging zigzags in the snow. These were instantly filled with swarms of Russians. . . . Around the crumpling ramparts of the forts the Turks had prepared positions with wire, and an entirely new device—namely, frozen snow; the snow had been constantly sprayed with water, and had frozen into a barrier of ice. The assault commenced at seven in the morning; by noon the Russian flag flew proudly over the fort. Erzerum was won!"

Kara Gubek fell on 12th February, and next day Fort Tafta, overlooking the Camel's Neck, was carried, after a Russian shell had exploded its magazine. The Russians were now in the rear of the main defences of the city, and during the next two days the forts surrendered one by one. On the evening of the 15th only the old rampart of the inner redoubts stood between the attackers and the city. The Turks knew that their last hope had gone, and almost immediately began to abandon the place. They streamed in disorderly crowds along the roads to Trebizond, Erzingan, and Diarbekr; and at eight o'clock on the morning of the 16th the Cossacks of the central column rode into the city, where they were soon joined by mounted men of the other columns. Erzerum was in Russian hands.

Russians dragging Field Guns up the Mountains.

(*From the picture by H. C. Seppings-Wright. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

"In the south," writes Mr. Seppings-Wright, an artist with the Russian armies in Armenia, "the whole region is covered with mountains, which rise to a height of 10,000 feet. There is a complete absence of roads. Thinking this region impassable to any important force, the Turkish staff entrusted its defence chiefly to Kurds. . . . By a kind of miracle the Russian troops dragged up, not mountain guns, but field guns. . . . Reaching the edge of the plateau, our men slid down the slopes amid cries of 'To Erzerum!'"

Without delay the Cossacks went in pursuit of the retreating Turks, and soon were busy rounding up prisoners and capturing guns. Some 12,753 unwounded Turks, 323 guns, nine standards, and vast quantities of ammunition and stores were taken. Between the 11th of January and the 17th of February the Turks cannot have lost less than 60,000 men. Five divisions are said to have been wiped out as fighting units.

The capture of Erzerum must be accounted one of the most brilliant victories of the war. Three columns had marched upon the city by different routes, and all had come together at the right moment. The central column had brilliantly carried the bridge at the crossing of the Araxes ; the left column had moved with amazing speed through the wild tangle of pathless hills, had dragged 8-inch guns over rocky crests sheathed in ice or deep in snow, and had assaulted the key-fort of the city by glissading down a mountain side. Only soldiers of the greatest endurance and the most dogged determination could have performed such a feat.

* * * * * * *

The man who was mainly responsible for the capture of Erzerum was General Yudenitch, the chief of the Caucasian army. He it was who defeated the Turks at Sarikamish in the winter of 1914, and planned the campaign which had just been crowned with success. He had spent his whole life in the Caucasus, and had specially trained his men for winter warfare amidst the snow-clad and blizzard-swept mountains. So constantly were his troops sent on route marches that he was nicknamed " The General on the Go." It is said that his Caucasian troops were ready in full marching order twenty-four hours after the Tsar gave the order for mobilization. When Erzerum was captured he was a man of fifty years of age, remarkable for his great modesty, his strong will, and his fixed belief in the truth of the old proverb, " Look before you leap." His favourite saying was, " Measure seven times before you cut anything." He believed in training his men and officers to think and act for themselves. " One who obeys without thinking," he said, " is worth much ; but a chief who educates his subordinates in the idea that every order must be blindly obeyed commits high treason."

* * * * * * *

Some idea of the difficulties which the Russians had to

encounter in their advance on Erzerum may be gathered from the following account written by a Russian officer. He tells us how his men descended from the mountains to attack the bridge over the Araxes.

"We held a position on the summit of a mountain rising 11,000 feet above sea level. Every morning there was a strong wind, which drove before it masses of snow and drifted up our positions to a depth of from 10 to 15 feet. Our shelters, huts, and kitchens were all buried in the snow. The wind was so fierce that most of our huts were almost blown to pieces, though they were held together with wire. No one so much as thought of warm food during those days. Not only were our kitchens buried in the snow, but we had no other means of heating water.

"At last we got orders to leave our burrows above the clouds and descend into the valley. We began the incredibly difficult task of finding our way down precipices coated thickly with snow. The men followed one another in single file, in endless chains, forcing their way through the deep snow with their chests. From time to time rifle shots were fired to guide those behind. Only after a whole day of wandering did we manage to assemble again. The hurricane hurled upon us dense clouds of snow. The men clung together in groups, so as not to lose sight of one another. Frozen snow penetrated our clothes and turned the cloth into a hard sheeting of ice. Masks of ice covered the soldiers' faces. One of the horses slipped and disappeared over a precipice.

"By desperate exertions we somehow managed to get our guns down into the valley. Here we were received by the detachment stationed there, who helped us with the final work of lowering the guns with straps. We had done well. Despite the awful difficulties of the path and mountain steeps, not a man had perished; not one had been left behind or lost. At the close of our march we were well rewarded for all we had gone through: our unexpected appearance caused a panic in the Turkish trenches."

* * * * * * *

Though most of the Turks in Erzerum retreated hastily when the main defences fell, there were some who preferred to die rather than yield. In one place a Russian company broke into a small fortified position which was held by a handful of Turks. The Russian officer invited them to surrender; but they replied with a volley, and fought on until not a single man remained alive.

* * * * * * *

In the second week of March the Tsar received in his palace at Tsarskoe Selo * Captain Konieff, the first officer to enter

* Town, 15 miles south by east of Petrograd, containing two of the Czar's palaces; the one built by Catherine I. in 1724, the other by Catherine II. in 1792.

Russian Soldiers with the Nine Turkish Banners captured at Erzerum.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

These nine gorgeous standards were captured in a fort at Erzerum by a brigade of Don Cossacks. The standards were taken to Tsarkoe Selo and presented to the Tsar by Captain Konieff, the first officer to enter Erzerum, and nine men representing various arms of the Caucasian forces. They were afterwards paraded through Petrograd and deposited in the cathedral of St. Peter and Paul.

Erzerum, and nine men of the Caucasian army, who presented him with several trophies from the captured fortress—the four keys of the city and nine Turkish banners. The Tsar talked with the men, and was eager to learn how the trophies had been seized. Finally he conferred upon each of them the Cross of St. George, and bade them thank their comrades in his name for the splendid courage and endurance which they had shown in the campaign. The standards were afterwards deposited in the cathedral of St. Peter and Paul.

* * * * * * *

Erzerum is chiefly inhabited by Armenians, a Christian people who have always been bitterly hated by the Turks. For the last forty years they have been terribly persecuted, and brutal massacres have been frequent, despite the protests of Britain and the United States. The Kurds, a fierce, war-like race of Mohammedans, are their neighbours. They live amongst the oak groves on the slopes of the mountains dividing Persia from Turkey, and pride themselves on being descended from King Solomon. In recent years they have been very active in torturing and slaughtering Armenian men, women, and children. Many of these Kurds were in Erzerum fighting for the Turks when the fortress fell. Before quitting the place they mercilessly slew thousands of the Armenian inhabitants. The wretched remnants of the persecuted nation hailed the appearance of the Russians with unfeigned joy. A Russian conquest of Armenia meant their salvation. To us in the West it seemed very fitting that the first portion of the Sultan's empire to be won was that in which the Turks had committed their foulest crimes.

* * * * * * *

The fall of Erzerum gave the Russians a frontier fortress from which they could strike into Turkish territory south, east, and west. They could not, however, be said to be in the heart of Asia Minor until they had crossed the Western Euphrates, and had left the mountains for the plains. Before this advance could be made, they were obliged to protect their flank by the capture of the Turkish port of Trebizond. A writer in *Blackwood's Magazine* tells us that Trebizond has no equal in beauty or historical interest among the cities on the Black Sea. It stands, with Constantinople, Smyrna, and

The Assault on Kara Gubek: Russian troops sliding down a mountain

(From the picture by H. G. Seppings-Wr

advancing by zigzags against a fort strengthened by a belt of ice.

ermission of The Illustrated London News.)

Amasia,* as one of the four cities in the Turkish Empire most favoured by nature. Trebizond has mountains behind it more lofty than those of its rivals, and it has the great advantage of being in a verdant region. It surpasses Smyrna and Amasia in the number and beauty of its ancient buildings. When the Ten Thousand reached it it was a prosperous city. In later times it became the capital of a Roman province, and was afterwards subject to the emperors who had their capital at Byzantium, which we now call Constantinople. Still later it became the seat of the emperors of Trebizond, and maintained its independence for wellnigh two hundred and fifty years. In 1461 it fell to the conquering Turks, and remained in their hands until the events which I am about to relate.

The old portion of the city stands on a small plateau which falls in steep cliffs to deep ravines on either side and in front slopes to the sea. Behind the city the plateau rises to higher ground. All along its edge are old walls with towers and castles, which form part of the fortifications. Spanning the gorges are great stone bridges which connect the old town with the surrounding suburbs. The streets of the city proper are narrow and dirty, but here and there we find mosques which were Greek churches in the Middle Ages. "Seen from the sea, you get a jumble of picturesque old creeper-grown walls and towers, irregular red roofs, and much foliage; above these lower features rise many minarets and domes, and behind and above them all are wooded hills and then mountains. The suburbs of Trebizond have now spread along the coast, for the city has grown to 50,000 or 60,000 inhabitants, and the old walled portion is only a small part of the whole."

Trebizond has no harbour and no railway communication, and therefore has great drawbacks as a port. Nevertheless it is the sea-gate of Erzerum, with which it is connected, as you know, by a good metalled road nearly two hundred miles long. Should the Russians make a base of Erzerum, they must take Trebizond, so as to prevent the Turks from landing forces on

* Ancient city of Asia Minor, beautifully situated on the Yeshil-Irmak, about two hundred miles to the south-east of Trebizond. It rose to greatness after the time of Alexander the Great, and was enriched with noble buildings by the early sultans. The rock tombs of the Castle Rock are famous; one of them is known as the "Mirror Tomb" because of its highly polished surface.

their flank. Only when Trebizond fell would it be possible for the Russians to push southwards and threaten the Baghdad railway, the main Turkish route of communication with Mesopotamia.

The Russians proposed to capture Trebizond by means of a combined land and sea movement. Transports carried the troops to Atina, some sixty miles east of Trebizond. There they were landed on 4th March, under cover of a heavy fire from the warships, and began their march along the coast. Difficult as this route was, it was far easier than that which lay through the terrible tangle of mountains in the interior. Further, if the weather remained good the troops could receive supplies and succour from the sea. The warships patrolled the coast, and easily drove off the *Breslau* when it attempted to interfere with their movements.

The march along the coast road was slow but sure. On 8th March the Russians were within thirty-five miles of Trebizond, but in the next nineteen days they only advanced five miles. On 6th April they reached the Kara Dere, a torrent flowing through a deep gorge and flanked by high mountains. Under German guidance the Turks had constructed strong defences along the left bank of the river. On 14th April a fierce battle was fought along the line of this river, and the Turks were thrust back and driven from position after position. On the 17th the Russians were within seven miles of Trebizond, and on the 18th they entered the place without serious opposition. Thus the most important of all the fortified towns on the coast of the Black Sea was lost to Turkey.

After their defeat at Kara Dere on the 14th the Turks decided to abandon Trebizond. It really was of no use to them now that the Russians were in command of the Black Sea. Any attempt to defend it would have meant that the garrison would be locked up inside the forts surrounding the town, and would finally be obliged to surrender. Before retreating, the Turks carried off or destroyed the guns and the stores, so that little booty fell into Russian hands. They marched in orderly fashion to Baiburt, about fifty miles north-west of Erzerum, where they joined up with their main forces, and formed the left wing of the armies facing the Russians.

The Turks had lost nothing by abandoning Trebizond, but the Russians had won a sea-gate that was bound to be of great

use to them for supply purposes. All the credit of this fine achievement must not go to the Russian troops which entered the port. The fleet had played an important part by convoying the soldiers, by bombarding the town, and by landing seamen and marines. The Russian armies further south had also helped in the capture. When the Turks saw that Trebizond was in danger they hurried up reinforcements from Gallipoli, and made a great effort to drive the Russians back. They suddenly attacked the right flank of the Russians, in the hope that they would weaken their centre to aid the threatened wing. Then they hurled their main forces at the centre, which lay west of Erzerum. Had they succeeded in breaking through, they would have compelled the Russians along the coast to retreat in order to avoid being surrounded and cut off from their communications. The Russians, however, were able to beat back these assaults, and the enemy's plan completely failed. Nevertheless the road from Trebizond to Erzerum was not yet open ; the Turks still clung to the passes along the road, and for many weeks the Russians failed to dislodge them.

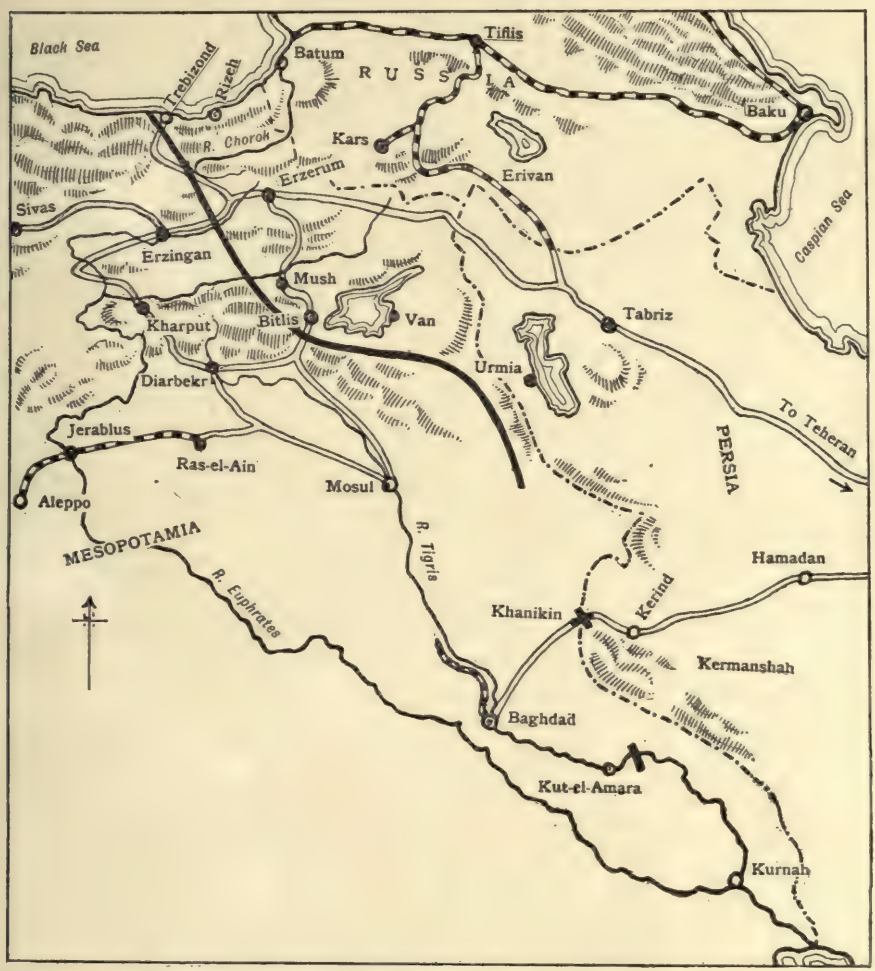
* * * * * * *

After the capture of Erzerum on 16th February General Yudenitch followed up the Turks with great energy as they retreated towards Erzingan and Baiburt. By the 19th of February his advanced guards had seized Mush, eighty miles south of Erzerum, and on the 25th they were in possession of Akhlat, on Lake Van. By 23rd March they had stormed Bitlis, and their cavalry were pushing on towards Diarbekr, on the edge of the Mesopotamian plain, and towards Mosul on the Tigris. But about the middle of April large Turkish reinforcements arrived on the line Diarbekr-Erzingan-Baiburt, and were able to check the advance of the Russians both westwards and southwards.

While, however, the Russians were prevented from pushing towards the Baghdad railway from Bitlis, a force, which for two months had been fighting the Kurds west of Lake Urmia, crossed the Turkish border and seized a town about eighty miles east of Mosul. Thirteen days after the fall of Kut the Russians were holding the front shown upon the map on the next page. It was not a continuous line of entrenchments, such as the Allies held in the West, but was broken by lofty mountains, amongst which troops could not operate. You will notice

that its southern end was only about two hundred and fifty miles, as the aeroplane flies, from the British forces on the Tigris.

Now let us return for a few moments to the British, who were still striving to carry the Turkish positions below Kut. On



Map illustrating the Russian Front in April 1916.

22nd May came the surprising news that two squadrons of Cossacks had ridden into General Gorringe's camp. Whence had they come? A Russian army under General Baratoff had been operating in Persia for many months past. Early in February

it had reached Hamadan, which you will see on the road leading to Baghdad, and by 12th March it had pushed on to Kerind, more than a hundred miles farther west. Here General Baratoff had called a halt of two months, in order that he might secure his flanks and make the road from Hamadan fit for the passage of artillery. From Kermanshah, which you will see fifty miles to the south-east of Kerind, a good road runs southwards for fifty miles to the hills. When these are crossed, a desert ride of forty miles brings the traveller to the banks of the Tigris. A bold dash of 200 miles through a country inhabited by wild Kurdish tribes would enable Russians and British to join hands. General Baratoff gave two of his cavalry leaders permission to make the attempt, and after a most adventurous ride they and their troopers galloped into the British lines. Some weeks later the dashing horsemen were paraded before Sir Percy Lake, who had been appointed to the command of the British forces in Mesopotamia in January, and by order of the King he decorated them with the Military Cross.

Already, in the West, Russians were fighting on French fields. One month before General Baratoff's troopers reined up in the British camp on the Tigris, a detachment of Russian infantry had safely landed at Marseilles, after a long voyage from the Pacific coast of Siberia. They had travelled halfway round the world to fight side by side with their gallant allies the French, who were now in the midst of the longest, fiercest, and most deadly battle known to the history of the world.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SENUSSI.

BEFORE I return to the Western front, let me relate the story of a dashing little campaign fought on the desert frontier of North-Western Egypt. You know that when Germany plotted to bring about the downfall of the British Empire she did not rely wholly upon her armies, great and well trained as they were. She sent her secret agents into all parts of the Empire and its borders,* and did her utmost to persuade the disaffected to rise in revolt as soon as war was declared. You have read how those who yielded to her blandishments in South Africa came to grief, and in a later chapter I shall tell you how some thousands of Irishmen were beguiled into a hopeless rebellion that was put down in a week. In this and the next chapter you shall learn how the Senussi, who live on the frontier of North-Western Egypt, were lured to their doom by German officers and their Turkish dupes.

In the first half of the nineteenth century an Algerian lawyer named Mohammed Ben Ali went to and fro in Morocco and Arabia preaching a reformed Mohammedan religion. In 1855 he and his followers settled at a place about one hundred and thirty miles south-west of Sollum, on the western frontier of Egypt. Mohammed died in 1859, and his second son, Sidi el Mahdi, became the leader of the sect known as the Senussi. This man gradually acquired authority over the desert tribes, and won the favour of the Sultan of Turkey. When he died, in 1902, his nephew succeeded him, but was dethroned seven years later.

* On June 1916 we learned that the Kaiser had actually written a letter to the Amir of Afghanistan, trying to persuade him to declare a holy war; but, happily, the Amir remained loyal to his promises, and insisted that his country should remain neutral.

In 1911, when the Turco-Italian War broke out, the Senussi fought fiercely against the Italians, and even after Turkey had made peace with Italy they continued the struggle. They professed, however, friendship towards the Egyptian Government, and in February 1915 undertook to keep peace on the frontier. In May several Turkish and two German officers appeared among them, and began to stir them up against Britain. One of the Turkish officers was Nuri Bey, a brother of Enver Bey, and it was he who persuaded the Senussi to throw in their lot with the enemy. He had already raised a large force of Bedouin Arabs, and now proposed to attack the Egyptian border.

Up to the month of November 1915 the Senussi remained quiet. They were watching events in Gallipoli, where, as you know, we were making but little progress. On 19th November some three or four hundred Arabs fell upon one of our frontier posts, but were beaten off. The leader of the Senussi still professed to be friendly; but there is no doubt that he was secretly urging his followers to take up arms against us. By 21st November more than two thousand Arabs, under Turkish and German officers, were threatening Sollum. As the place was only defended by four British officers and 120 British and Egyptian soldiers, it was decided to withdraw the garrison to Mersa-Matruh, a small seaport and Egyptian coastguard station on the coast, about one hundred and fifty miles west of Alexandria. At the same time a mounted brigade of Yeomanry and Australian Light Horse, with a battery of the Royal Horse Artillery and four infantry battalions, was dispatched to Mersa-Matruh.

On 11th December this force came in contact with detachments of the enemy and dispersed them. By this time, however, the Senussi had occupied Sollum and other frontier posts; and the main body, which numbered about two thousand four hundred, and was armed with Maxims and field guns and a plentiful supply of ammunition, had taken up a position under Nuri Bey and Jaafar, the chief of the Senussi.

CHAPTER XV.

A GALLANT RESCUE.

ON the morning of Christmas Day our troops moved out in two columns—one for a frontal attack, the other to turn the enemy's flank. Aeroplanes spied out the enemy's position, and "spotted" for the artillery. As soon as our gunners got to work, light-draught vessels off the coast began shelling the series of sand ridges on which the enemy was posted. While our infantry carried ridge after ridge the cavalry managed to get to the south of the enemy, who then fled westwards, leaving 200 dead and one gun behind them.

Again, on 22nd January, a force of all arms, consisting of British, South African, Australian, and Indian troops, marched westwards from Mersa-Matruh * to engage the enemy, whose camp had been discovered by our airmen about ten miles west of Bir Shola. Each man carried a day's rations, and a further supply for two days was packed on the motor wagons which accompanied the column. From 3 a.m. until 10 p.m. the troops tramped seventeen miles across sodden and heavy ground, and bivouacked by the side of a small well, from which the field engineers pumped sufficient water for men and horses.

Next morning the march was resumed in two columns, and after eight miles had been covered the mounted men, who formed the advance guard, came in contact with the enemy at Agagia. The infantry now marched to the sound of the guns, and soon found that the enemy had dug themselves in on a low ridge with a front of two and a half miles. Our men were received with heavy fire from machine guns and nine-pounders. While the mounted troops worked round the flanks, the infantry were sent forward to attack the centre. They had to cross a stretch

* See map, p. 133.

of desert, swept by the enemy's fire and without a scrap of cover; but they pressed forward with great steadiness, and by means of a series of rushes drove the enemy from their positions. Again the Arabs fled, firing as they retired, until the dusk and the desert hid them from view. About 650 of the enemy were killed or wounded, and the British loss was 28 killed and 274 wounded.

It is said that the South Africans suffered severely from the rifle fire because they were so big and tall, and that many of them, who were unused to long marches on foot, became so lame that they had to remove their boots and make their way to the rear. When, however, they heard their comrades in the firing line raise the South African war-cry they turned right about, and with their boots in their hands charged back. In the excitement of the battle they quite forgot their sufferings, and fought barefooted all day. The two days' march back to Matruh was very trying for the wounded, who had to be carried on stretchers or on limber wagons. The remainder of January was occupied in strengthening the position which had been won, and in establishing frontier posts.

On 26th February we followed up the enemy, who had taken up a strong position some fifteen miles to the south-east of their former position; and, thanks to another fine advance by the South African Infantry, the Arabs were again defeated and forced to flee. The Dorset Yeomanry were detached from the main body in order to outflank the Senussi and cut off their retreat. An officer of the Dorsets thus describes his experiences :—

"Dismounting on a little ridge overlooking a valley, we could see all the Senussi retiring in long straggling lines of men and camels. With two machine guns we gave them rapid fire; but they were between fifteen hundred and two thousand yards off. It was very difficult to observe the fire or to get the correct range, as the sun was hot and there was a lot of heat shimmer. Moving on again, we came into dismounted action at long range against a ridge held by the enemy with a considerable force and four machine guns.

"Then came the cream of the whole thing. Lieutenant-Colonel Souter got us on to our horses, and we advanced first in line of squadron columns and then in line, and charged with drawn swords right across a wide, open valley against a ridge in front about a mile and a half off. It really was a great show, as the Maxims on the ridge ploughed up the sand at our feet. I really thought we were in for it; but the gunners must have got flurried, or raised their sights or something, as suddenly the fire seemed to lift and whistled over our heads.

Ships of the Air attack Ships of the Desert.

On February 6, 1916, the following report was received from Western Egypt:—"In the region of one of the four great wells in the desert between Alexandria and Matruh, two of our aeroplanes dropped bombs on a Senussi village and demolished a camel convoy. Some camels were laden with high explosives, and violent explosions occurred, causing great damage."

"We had a good many casualties in the charge, but not nearly so many as I expected. Colonel Souter led us in front of the whole regiment, which rode behind him in line as at a general's inspection. It was splendid.

"We charged with a yell over the crest of the little hill, and suddenly saw beyond us a wide valley, full of the enemy running like mad. In less time than it takes to write we were among them, sticking and slashing, and the men went at it like furies. Most of our casualties happened then. . . . Colonel Souter had his horse shot under him, and a second lieutenant had two horses shot under him. There were some very narrow escapes. The most wonderful bit of experience was that Colonel Souter, when his horse fell, found himself in front of Jaafar Pasha, who surrendered to him.

"We rode on through the valley, and then rallied to the left; but as there were so many wounded, and the horses were done, we could not do much more. I don't know how many of the enemy we got, but I should think about three hundred. Our casualties were heavy; but I believe that we have given the Senussi a real blow, which I hope will shorten or end the show."

* * * * * * * *

Now let me tell you a story which sounds as if it had been lifted bodily from the pages of a boy's book of adventure. On November 5, 1915, H.M. armed boarding-steamer *Tara* was sunk by a German submarine in the Bay of Sollum. The Germans rescued some of the crew and handed them over to the Turks, saying, "You are now the prisoners of his Most Excellency the Sultan." Others who managed to gain the shore were also captured and held captive by the Senussi, who treated them shamefully. Their sufferings were shared by a number of men who had escaped when the steamship *Mooringa* went down on 11th November. They became slaves of the Senussi, and were forced to work in the fierce sun, like the Christian captives of the Bey of Algiers* who were urged to their tasks by the whips of their masters. One of the *Tara's* men kept a diary, from which you will learn how the poor fellows were tortured.

"*Nov.* 21.—Yesterday one of the prisoners was missing, and instead of the guard being punished, as would be the case in England, we have all been punished by being kept without food for twenty-four hours, and marching twenty-six miles.

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* Down to the year 1830 Algiers was a pirate stronghold, and was full of Christian slaves, who were forced to work for their masters. Cervantes, the author of *Don Quixote*, was one of these slaves for five years, but he managed to escape. The British bombarded Algiers in 1816, and the French in 1826, and the pirates were finally stamped out in 1830, when the French took possession of the town.

"*Nov.* 22.—At a place called Zebla we were told that the Senussi had declared war on England. Our position is peculiar. We were sunk under the German flag, and landed under the Turkish flag into a neutral country, which has now declared war on us.

"*Nov.* 23.—Day after day in the scorching, maddening sun, in ragged clothes, we have tramped the desert. Our feet are blistered and burnt, our eyes bloodshot and almost blinded. We have lost nearly all our strength because of scanty and bad food. We can just drag one leg after another. We only stop for a moment when it is impossible to move an inch further, and then we are prodded on by the bayonets behind. . . . The air is so hot that we can scarcely breathe, and our tongues are black and swollen.

Map illustrating the Campaign against the Senussi.

"*Nov.* 28–*Dec.* 2.—We have been put into a well. It is very damp, about ten feet deep and eighteen feet square, with only room for a man to get through the opening; so it can be imagined what it is like when seventy-eight men sleep in it at night.

"For four dreadful nights in succession we have had to crawl into this horrible hole—the whole seventy-eight of us—and try and breathe until the dawn. It must be much worse than the Black Hole of Calcutta. I don't know how we have lived through it. Owing to Leading Seaman J. Markwick being taken seriously ill, we have been allowed to come out into the fresh air again. It was like coming out of a tomb. No words can describe the awful experience of those nights. The only ventilation came through the little hole at the top of the well, through which we could just catch a glimpse of the sky, and occasionally the grinning black face and the white teeth of one of the guards looking down upon us as we groaned and gasped

The Fight on Christmas Day. Led Horses coming out of Action at Mersa-Matruh.

(*From the picture by C. Caton Woodville. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

In the distant background on the left is a ridge held by the enemy and shelled by the R.H.A. Nearer the foreground are some of our dismounted men covering the advance. In the foreground are led horses coming out of action. The sea is on the right of the picture (not seen); ships are shelling the retiring enemy.

for air. . . . To make matters worse, our food has been reduced to twelve ounces of rice per day per man."

So the miserable story goes on. Sometimes the starving men managed to satisfy their hunger by eating a sheep that had been killed by a wolf, or a young camel that had been drowned. In December they were reduced to snails, and on Christmas Day they feasted as follows :—

BREAKFAST.—Rice, boiled with a little salt.

DINNER.—Two ounces of boiled goat flesh, and " pudding " (made of flour and sugar that had been saved for the occasion).

TEA.—One small pancake, with very weak tea.

British troops were now on the move, and our sailor reports : " The next few days we saw searchlights in the sky, and heard the boom of heavy guns from the north-east. On 20th February Captain R. S. Gwatkin-Williams, commander of the *Tara*, tried to escape, in order that he might reach Sollum and beg deliverance for his men. Some few of us knew he was going, and we fully understood the perils he would have to go through. We prayed earnestly to our heavenly Father to protect his footsteps." Unhappily he was captured before he had gone far. Our sailor's entry for 29th February reads as follows :—

" About 3 p.m. we suddenly heard rifle shots to the northward. A few minutes later there appeared over the brow of a small hill some men and camels, and there, walking apart from the rest, was our brave captain. We were now witnesses of one of the most degrading and brutal sights it has been my lot to see. He was lashed with a rhinoceros hide whip, and the guard punched him violently in the face. Then the women came up and pelted him with the largest stones they could find."

Relief, however, was on the way. You have already read how the Arabs and the Senussi were beaten and scattered on 26th February at Agagia. On 14th March our troops occupied Sollum, which had been abandoned by the enemy, and that very day nine armoured motor cars and twenty-six other cars, together with ten motor ambulances, under the command of the Duke of Westminster, went forward in pursuit of the enemy. The going was bad for the first eight miles, but after that the cars struck a good road, and flew along at nearly forty miles an hour. Hundreds of Bedouins fleeing westwards were passed on the road ; but they were unmolested, as more important work was afoot.

The main camp was now seen, and all the armoured cars but two, which were detailed for a flank attack, advanced in line. As they approached they were fired on by one gun and two machine guns, but the gun teams were shot down at a distance of 400 yards. Then the cars dashed into the camp, and the enemy fled in every direction, leaving ninety-one of their prisoners in our hands. The poor fellows were in the last stage of hunger and despair. They were thunderstruck at the sight of the armoured cars, and at first thought they saw a mirage. Food was immediately served out to them, and "the men might have been seen holding beef in one hand and biscuit in the other—just gorging." Four of them had died of neglect, and their captain had recited the burial service over them from memory. Our sailor's diary thus concludes :—

"It is pretty clear to us now that we were rescued in the very nick of time. We were in such a state of weakness that we should not have lasted long, and what would have been the end of it all does not bear thinking about. So we one and all of us say, 'God bless the Duke of Westminster and his brave men for their very timely rescue.'"

Thus happily ended one of the most adventurous episodes of the war. For the first time armoured motor cars had proved their value in desert warfare. They had made a most dashing raid, and, besides rescuing the prisoners, had scattered the enemy and captured his artillery and machine guns. By the end of March the remnants of the Senussi had been driven far beyond the Egyptian border, and had been rendered powerless for further mischief.

CHAPTER XVI.

VERDUN—PAST AND PRESENT.

NO place-name is more familiar to the readers of these pages than Verdun, the strongest of the four great entrenched camps which keep watch and ward over the eastern frontier of France. It was, you will remember, the vast strength of these fortresses which decided the Germans to commit the crime with which they opened the great struggle. They had not yet put their giant guns and high explosives to the practical test of war, and they feared that the siege of Verdun and its sister strongholds—Toul, Epinal, and Belfort—would entail so long a delay that they would lose the advantage of surprise. When, however, the forts of Belgium and North France were crushed to shapeless ruin one after the other in the course of a few days, they knew that the invasion of Belgium was more than a crime: it was a blunder.

Verdun stands on both banks of the Meuse, at the meeting-place of two great roads which give access from the heart of France to Germany. A town so situated was bound to become important, and Verdun has been famous since the days of the Romans. It figures in early European history as the place where Charlemagne's wide domains were divided up amongst his three grandsons,* and France and Germany were separated, never again to be united. The great military engineer Vauban fortified it, and in 1870 it held out stubbornly. When Alsace and Lorraine were lost to the French, Verdun became one of the eastern bulwarks of France. Prior to the present war it was probably the most powerful fortress in Europe. It had an inner line of redoubts, and beyond them an outer line of

* By the Treaty of Verdun, 843 A.D.

forts and batteries was pushed out for some thirty miles. In all there were thirty-six forts of various sizes, and at its greatest width the camp was nine miles across. Before the war the old masonry and earthworks had been replaced by concrete and steel, and the guns were mounted in turrets, as at Liége.

The first month of the war saw the fortresses of Belgium and North France go down with startling quickness before the great howitzers of the enemy. General Sarrail, who was in command at Verdun, soon knew that the only way to save the stronghold was to construct lines of entrenchments far beyond the outer line of forts, and move his big guns into them. Hardly had this work begun when the Crown Prince began to attack the fortress. He was so strongly held up at Verdun and Nancy that the German High Command came to the conclusion that the main French forces were massed between these two places. This led, as you know, to that wrong grouping of the German armies which brought about the failure at the Marne.

While the Battle of the Aisne was proceeding, a bridge-head was won at St. Mihiel, and the Crown Prince in the Forest of the Argonne strove to "fit the strap to the buckle," * and thus surround the Verdun position. For sixteen months he struggled to join hands with the forces at St. Mihiel, but all in vain. His front remained a horse-shoe. Do what he might, he could not turn it into a ring.

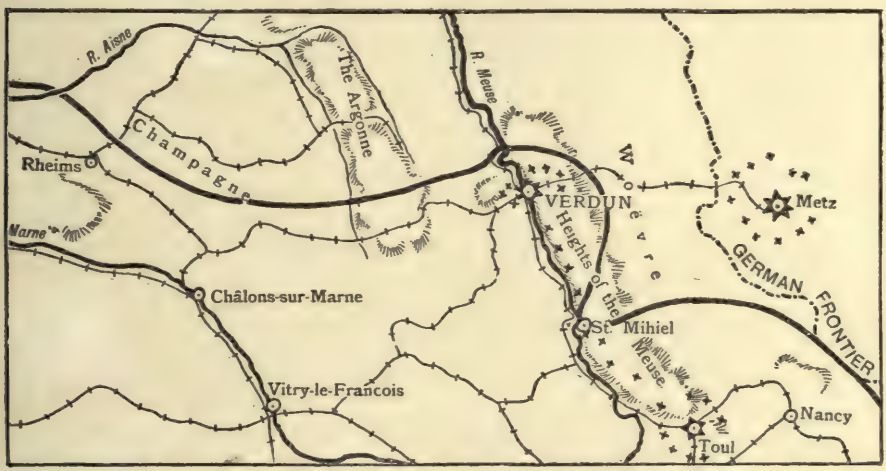
Early in 1916 the Germans began to prepare for a new great offensive in the West. There were several reasons why they should attack without delay. They knew that as soon as the Russians were ready, France, Britain, Italy, and Russia would fall upon them on three fronts at the same time, and that they would not be able to save themselves by rushing reinforcements from one front to the other, as they had done in the past. Their only hope of victory was to overcome the Allies in the West before a great concerted movement could begin. If they struck early and struck hard, the Allies might be tempted to make their attack before all things were fully prepared, and so would be taken at a disadvantage.

At what point on the long line from the Yser to the Swiss frontier should they attack? They might make a great bid for Ypres or Arras; but these places were mere shells, and their capture would not be considered a great achievement

* See Vol. II., p. 281.

either by their own people or by neutrals. Verdun was known all the world over as the most powerful fortress of Eastern France ; it was still intact, and had so far defied all the efforts of the Crown Prince. If it could be captured, the German army would win great glory, and the Crown Prince would recover some of that credit which he had lost by his many failures.

Accordingly, the German High Command determined to capture Verdun at any cost. The plan of campaign was to be that adopted by Mackensen when he broke the Russian front on the Donajetz. Thousands of guns were to be massed



Map showing the Battle-line from the Aisne to the German Frontier before the Battle of Verdun.

before the French lines, and a whirlwind of fire was to rage until the trenches were wiped out. Then, while the guns played upon the ground behind the destroyed position, and so prevented reinforcements from being rushed up, German infantry would be pushed forward to seize the wrecked trenches and turn them into defensive positions. Thus slowly, and step by step, the French lines would be driven in and Verdun would fall. The Germans did not propose to waste men by sending them against unbroken positions. All that would be required of their infantry was to occupy and hold the ground already conquered by the guns. For every stage in the advance they meant to use fresh troops, so that the forward

Verdun : showing the Cathedral and Houses lining the Meuse. [*By permission of The Sphere.*

movement might be made, from start to finish, by vigorous, unwearied men.

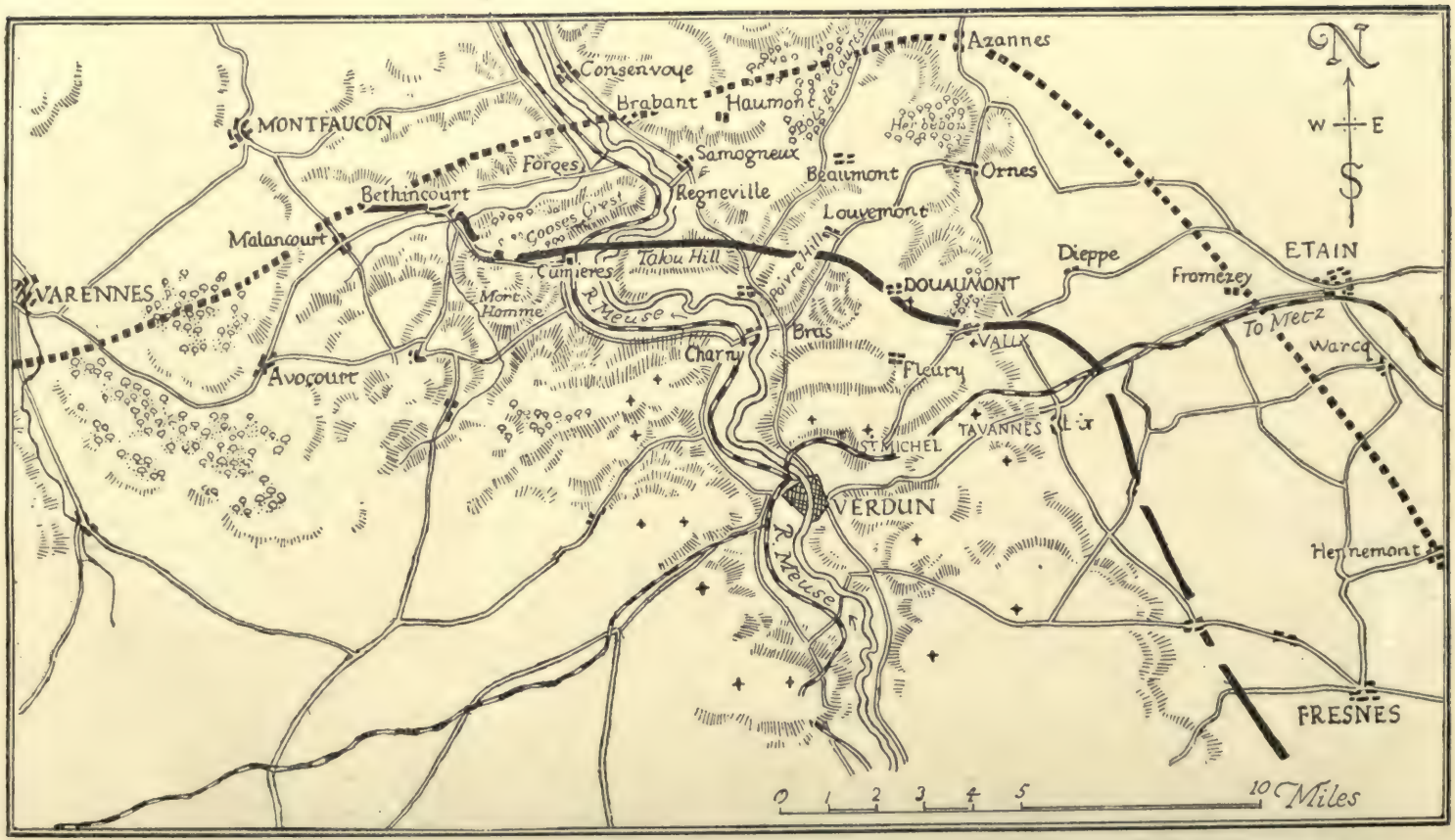
Before I begin to describe the Battle of Verdun—the longest, fiercest, and deadliest battle ever known in the history of the world—I must try to give you a clear idea of the country over which the struggle was to rage. Look carefully at the map on page 142. The shading, which almost covers it, shows you clearly that Verdun stands on the edge of highland country.

Give your attention first to the district on the right or east bank of the Meuse. You notice a series of heights which rise steeply from the stream to some five hundred feet above the water-level in the valley. From west to east these heights are from five to six miles broad ; at the eastern end they fall sharply to the clayey flats of the Woëvre. The whole district is really a tableland, and the hills do not rise high above the general level. Most of the plateau is cultivated, and here and there we find large woods of beech, oak, and chestnut. Little villages and farms are scattered over it, and several roads cross it by means of the hollows. Ravines run down from the summit of the plateau to the Meuse on the west and to the Woëvre on the east. All of these ravines are deeply cut in the plateau, and are filled with scrub. Only one railway crosses the region. It winds eastwards from Verdun, and tunnels through the ridge to reach Eix station, from which it proceeds to Metz.

About a mile and a half to the north of Verdun you will see a hill marked Côte de Froide Terre*—the crest of cold ground. Suppose you are standing on this ridge in the early days of February 1916, what do you see ? To the north stretches a rolling plain, broken here and there by the gray-brown of winter woods. To the south you see the citadel, the walls, and the smoking chimneys of Verdun. To the west and north-west your eye follows a series of low ridges which continue on and on until they merge into the dark hump of the Argonne Forest. To the east you see the blue plain of the Woëvre, dotted with forests and gleaming with meres and streams. In the haze beyond lies Germany.

Now follow on the map the line of dark thick dots which represents the French front as it was on February 26, 1916. Run your finger along the line beginning from the west. You observe that it runs north-eastwards to the north of the villages

* See map on next page.



West (right) Bank of the Meuse. **Map of the Verdun Salient.** *East (left) Bank of the Meuse.*

[This map should be carefully studied and constantly referred to in following the progress of the great series of battles fought in front of Verdun.]

of Malancourt and Bethincourt and crosses to the left bank of the Meuse. About a mile south-west of the place where the line crosses the Meuse you see the village of Forges * on a brook formed by the junction of two streams, the more southerly of which flows in a valley along the west side of a hill known as Mort Homme, or Dead Man. In later pages you will hear much about this strangely-named hill.

On the eastern side of the Meuse you see the village of Brabant, and notice that the line still runs north-east in front of the village of Haumont, † through the Bois de Caures ‡—the Wood of Caures—to Azannes, which is between nine and ten miles as the aeroplane flies north-east of Verdun. At Azannes the line turns sharply to the south-east and crosses the Verdun-Metz railway to Hennemont.

You have now followed the outer defensive entrenchments of the great camp of Verdun—a salient of, roughly, thirty-five miles from end to end. Between this line and Verdun there were a second and a third main position, with trenches between them. The continuous black line on the map shows the outer position which had been prepared in 1874; it was now to be the second line of the Verdun system. Gangs of labourers had been employed all through the early winter of 1914 in making the lines as strong as possible. Miles of barbed wire formed a network at all points of danger. The forts were dismantled, and the guns in them were moved out to carefully chosen positions, where they were cunningly concealed. Sheltered roads were made, so that troops and supplies could be brought to the front readily and safely, and no device was neglected which could add to the strength of the defence. Verdun was no longer a fortress in the old sense of the word; it was simply an area such as the British were holding in front of Ypres, but far stronger and not overlooked.

Strong as the French position was, it had its weaknesses. First of all it was a salient, and therefore could be attacked from many points. Secondly, the city of Verdun was, like Ypres, the neck of a bottle. All supplies and reinforcements for the lines on the plateau had to pass over the bridges of Verdun and through its streets. In the third place, its railway communications might be broken. Already the main line along the Meuse valley had been cut, and the Paris line which passes

* *Forzh.* † *O'mon* (*n* nasal). ‡ *Core.*

south of the Argonne Forest was within range of the German guns. Only a branch line remained. From the point of view of the Germans Verdun invited attack. They determined to bombard the city, destroy the railways, and catch the enemy in a wedge of highlands where he was shut in by a river, now swollen by winter rains to a width of a thousand yards.

The French High Command fully realized all the dangers of their position, and prepared for them. They organized a motor transport service, which made them independent of the railways; and to the south of the city they constructed strong positions, to which they could retire if the worst should befall. They meant to make the enemy pay a heavy price for every inch of ground that he won, but they did not propose to endanger their forces by holding on to positions which were no longer defensible. Their policy was to let the Germans butt their heads against the trenches and take a heavy toll of them as they did so. They meant to stand on the defensive, and only counter-attack when a position of great importance was lost. For such a policy they needed men of the most dogged courage—men whose strength lay in resistance, and who could hold on with grim determination to the bitter end. In former wars the French had not shown themselves possessed of this virtue in a high degree, and there were many besides the Germans who thought that the task would be too much for them. A new France, however, had arisen, and the men whom she had bred were soon to show themselves as stubborn and unflinching in defence as any that have ever borne arms.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GREATEST BATTLE OF HISTORY.

IN the last weeks of January and the first fortnight of February the Germans made attacks on the Allied front in Flanders, Artois, and Champagne. It was clear that a mighty blow was to be struck somewhere, but the exact spot was as yet uncertain. The object of these attacks was to draw off the attention of the Allies from the wooded country on the right bank of the Meuse, where the Germans were massing no less than half a million men, and more guns than they had ever brought together before. In that country of forest and valley they could array their forces without being observed either by land or by air. Weeks were occupied in the work, and though the French had some inkling of what was going on, they only discovered the full strength and meaning of the movement after the first attack had been launched.

A writer in a Dutch newspaper thus described the great array which was secretly preparing in the hinterland of Verdun :—

"Over the roads leading towards Verdun artillery and ammunition were brought up in such quantities as the history of war has never seen on such a limited area. The country seemed to be covered with an incredible number of guns. We could hardly believe what we saw round Verdun. Long rows of guns, as in old battle pictures, set up in open fields, the gunners standing about them, and on the hilltops observation posts with their great telescopes uncovered. When I shut my eyes I still see before me those curved lines, row upon row of guns in endless array, with gunners moving about them in the open battlefield."

The command of this mighty war engine was entrusted to the Crown Prince—not because he had given any evidence of possessing military genius, but because he was the Kaiser's

The Zouave Bugler's Last Call.

During the great German attack the few survivors in the first-line trenches were entirely cut off from their comrades in the second line. Help was urgently needed, but it was impossible to communicate with the reserves. The telephone wires were broken to atoms, and nothing could be seen in the dense cloud of smoke and gas. There was only one way to signal to those behind, and that was by bugle; but this meant certain death to the bugler, who would have to lower his gas mask in order to sound his call. The gallant fellow did not wait for the word of com-

heir, and a great victory would bring him honour and glory and make his throne secure in days to come. Old Marshal von Haeseler, who had been the Kaiser's military tutor, and had more than once sharply rebuked his imperial master for bad generalship at manœuvres, was appointed as the Crown Prince's adviser. De Castelnau had already selected the general who was to conduct the French defence, but the new chief did not arrive until the battle had raged for five days. De Castelnau had but 12,000 men lining the trenches when the Germans were about to attack. He immediately hurried up new divisions, collected heavy artillery from forts and even from ships in the navy, and further strengthened his army with an immense number of machine guns and field guns. Thanks to his untiring energy, the first awful thrust of the Germans failed, and time was gained in which to prepare for a defence which is unequalled in the story of warfare.

* * * * * * *

On Wednesday, 15th February, the German guns began to thunder. Heavy pieces threw shells into Verdun itself, and the governor ordered the city to be cleared of civilians. The French guns replied, and tried to discover the whereabouts of the enemy's batteries, which seemed to be massed in the woods in front of Forges and Brabant.* French airmen went up, and reported that in some places the German guns were as close together as apples in a basket. Now, for the first time, the French were certain that a great assault was about to be made on Verdun.

The bombardment of the 15th led to nothing. Six days later came the first great shock. At a quarter-past seven in the damp, foggy morning of Monday, the 21st, the most furious storm of artillery fire ever known burst upon the French trenches. The fire was regulated by six captive balloons, which floated over the German lines. Thousands of shells of all kinds—some whistling, some howling, others moaning—sped through the air, and exploded with a continuous, deafening roar. A cloud of earth and smoke arose that blotted out the view like a thick fog. Under that awful rain of destruction the French first lines were utterly wrecked; the communication trenches were shattered; the woods were torn to splinters; the very shape of the hills was altered.

* Refer for places mentioned in this chapter to map on page 142.

It has always been the habit of the French to hold their firing trenches and first support lines with few men, and to withdraw them when the bombardment begins. They allow the enemy to occupy their wrecked trenches, and then let loose their "75's," and spring counter-attacks in order to win them back again. On that February morning, when the massed German guns began their awful onslaught, the French followed their usual custom, and retired to their reserve lines, though not without loss. Meanwhile the French guns were busy trying to create a barrier of fire in front of the wrecked trenches, so as to prevent the German advance.

At five o'clock in the afternoon, when the first-line trenches of the French were heaped and pitted like a lunar landscape, the German guns lifted their sights and lengthened their fuses, and rained a torrent of shells upon the ground behind. Then, headed by bomb-throwers and pioneers, the Germans advanced to the wrecked trenches, and with feverish haste began to put them in a condition of defence. For weeks past they had been trained for this work, and had been promised an easy and speedy triumph. They had been told that this was "the last offensive against the French," and that they would be in Verdun in four days. On the afternoon of 21st February it seemed that the prophecy would be fulfilled to the letter.

The first point in the game had been won by the Germans. The firing trenches and most of the support lines were carried in the centre, and on the German left in the Wood of Haumont and in the Wood of Caures. In the course of the night the French delivered a counter-attack, and won back the lost support lines in the Wood of Caures, but, under the incessant rain of shells, could advance no further. It was necessary that a stand should be made while the main body of the French were moved back to new ground, and a most stubborn resistance was put up in the village of Haumont next day. The infantry holding this village, and the artillery posted in the woods and on the crest behind, were quite cut off by the German fire; no supplies could reach them, and they were without news of what was going on in their rear and on their flanks. Some of the guns fired at the advancing Germans at point-blank range, and mowed them down by hundreds. As one wave of the attackers was destroyed another followed, and when the enemy began to appear in the rear all hope of holding out had gone. The

gunners, having fired away all their shells, blew up their guns and retired.

A battery of heavy guns on the crest behind Haumont was silenced and all its crew killed, but a sergeant of artillery managed to collect a few gunners and get it going again. This heroic man remained at his post until the enemy was close upon him, when he blew up the guns and tried to retire, but in vain.

The fiery torrent was pouring down on every road by which ammunition and supplies could come up, and shells were falling upon the village at the rate of twenty a minute ; nevertheless the regiment which was holding it clung to the ruins, and behind some wire which had escaped destruction poured a murderous machine-gun fire on the advancing enemy. Their resistance, however, was vain. The Germans crept into the village, and reached the house where the colonel and his staff were preparing to make a last stand. They fired the place, and turned machine guns on every door and window. Preferring death by the bullet to death by burning, the colonel walked through the machine-gun fire, and, strange to say, was untouched. He rallied the remnants of the gallant regiment, and led them to a new position in the rear.

The same kind of heroism was witnessed in the Wood of Caures, where Colonel Driant and two battalions of the famous Chasseurs were striving to hold back the enemy. When the village of Haumont fell, the Germans turned all their guns on to the trenches in the wood, and soon reduced them to ruin. Then Colonel Driant stood upon the parapet of a wrecked trench and cried, " Charge, my children ! Long live France ! " and the Chasseurs, though their ranks were terribly thinned, and they were being surrounded, plied grenade and bayonet with unfaltering courage. When the Germans managed to enfilade the chief point of the defence, Colonel Driant ordered the remnants of his battalions to withdraw. He himself never left the wood alive.

The most successful stand, however, was made in the Wood of Herbebois,* which you will see on the map to the north-west of the village of Ornes. The Germans had gained a footing in this wood on 21st February, but the French had counter-attacked on the evening of that day, and had pinned the enemy down. All through the 22nd grenade fighting went on with-

* *Erb-bwā.*

out pause, and the defenders still held their own. On the 23rd an enemy battalion pushed into the wood, but was almost wholly destroyed by the fire of French rifles and "75's." Four other attacks followed in quick succession, but all were beaten back. At a quarter-past four on the 23rd the gallant defenders received the order to retire. The men saw no reason why they should withdraw, and grumbled loudly. They had fought superbly, and had done the most heroic deeds. At one point four bombers had held a post against the enemy for twenty hours. The front was littered with German dead, and the men were full of confidence, despite intense cold, lack of food, and great fatigue. Only when the situation was explained to them, and they were assured that they had done more than their share, would they consent to retire.

* * * * * * *

By the morning of 23rd February the French had fallen back to an almost straight front, running from Samogneux,* in front of Beaumont, and through the south end of the Wood of Herbebois. If you look closely at the map, you will see that the new position covered two broad humps of plateau, with the steep valley of Beaumont between them. You already know that the French plan was to hold up the Germans at each stage of the advance, and having killed as many as possible of them, to fall back little by little until the final position was reached, where the last stand would be made.

On the morning of the 23rd the French tried to counter-attack from Samogneux, but a storm of shell from the German guns put a stop to the advance. There was much fierce fighting during the day, and for the most part it took place in the open. When the Germans in turn began to push forward the French guns swept line after line of them to earth. The German losses were very heavy, but before long they were greater than had ever been known in the history of war. Thousands of men were ruthlessly sent forward to their death, and over their dead bodies thousands of others were rushed to a similar fate.

While the French wings held fast, the centre swayed to and fro like a pendulum. As darkness closed in the line was so badly battered, and the German guns from posts far out in the Woëvre were wreaking such havoc, that a retirement on a large scale became necessary. There was desperate fighting all

* *Sam-o-new.*

the next day, and by the night of Thursday, the 24th, the French east of the Meuse had been forced back to a line running eastwards along the base of Talou Hill, across Poivre (Pepper) Hill, and along the plateau of Douaumont to the gorge of Vaux, and thence to Eix station. In four days' fighting they had yielded a strip of ground varying in width from six miles to two miles. They had lost heavily in killed and wounded and prisoners, and now stood with their backs to the wall on the highest portion of the plateau, holding the last defensive position covering Verdun. If either Pepper Hill or the Douaumont tableland should be lost, the coveted city would assuredly fall into the hands of the Germans.

The French people knew well that their forces were at bay, and that the fate of their beloved country was trembling in the balance; yet, though very anxious, they remained calm and confident. They knew nothing of the steps which had been taken to resist the German onset, but they had faith in the skill of their generals and in the undying bravery of their soldiers. They refused to be cast down, and waited patiently for a deliverance similar to that which had been vouchsafed to them when Joffre turned upon the enemy and flung him back from the Marne in September 1914.

Early on Friday morning—the fifth day of the battle—snow began to fall heavily. There was little wind, and the frost was keen. With the first light of dawn the Germans began their second great effort. So far they had succeeded. Another great onslaught, and victory would be achieved. Long before the sun was up the German batteries again opened fire; but the defenders were now holding a position which afforded them better cover than formerly. Moreover, two new brigades had arrived, and supports were on the way. Every French soldier knew that he must perish rather than yield another inch of ground. For another twenty-four hours he must make a supreme effort to stem the torrent of the enemy's advance if France was to be saved.

The Germans were now making furious attacks upon that portion of the French line extending from Pepper Hill to the village of Douaumont—a distance of some four and a half miles. Pepper Hill, you will notice, rises steeply from the river. Between Pepper Hill and the Hill of Talou to the west a road runs northwards to Beaumont, and on the eastern side of Pepper Hill a road leads from the village of Bras past Louve-

Bird's-eye View illustrating the German Advance on Verdun through Brabant and Herbebois.

The outer dotted line represents the German position on February 21st, when the great assault on Verdun began.

The inner dotted line shows the position occupied by the Germans on April 1st.

The old city of Verdun stands on the Meuse, at the place where the great highroad from Pa its bridges from both sides of the river. In Roman times it was a military station, and in the Mid Lorraine was still "Lothringen," and owed its allegiance to the Holy Roman emperors. When t When Louis XIV. was reorganizing the defences of France, Vauban demolished the old walls, a place, barring the main road to Paris; but on September 1792 it surrendered after a brief bombardme

In 1875 Verdun was hastily fortified by erecting a circle of earthwork redoubts on the positi permanent forts of masonry and earthwork was afterwards erected. Prior to the war, these wo and between these forts lines of felled trees entangled with barbed wire formed barriers to; t fire of the forts to sweep the fronts of these barriers. Verdun thus became the strongest fortress Swiss frontier. You already know that the old scheme of defence was abandoned early in the w and moved to the rear of the new positions.

the Rhine crosses the river. It is also the meeting-point of many cross-roads which converge on ges the stronghold of the Counts of Verdun, who were princes of the empire in the days when istrict passed to France, Henry IV. built a citadel on a bold spur of the hills above the town. rew around the place a ring of ramparts, bastions, and ditches. It was then supposed to be a strong the war of 1870, though defended only by Vauban's old ramparts, it made a gallant defence. here the German guns had been posted during the siege. On the sites of these redoubts a circle of rmed the inner line of defence. There was a second circle of forts and batteries still further out, lvance of the enemy. Broad alleys were permanently kept open through the woods to enable the rance, and the most northerly stronghold of the lines of fortifications extending southward to the nd that trench lines were constructed far from the city, and the guns of the forts were made mobile,

mont to Ornes. To the east of the latter road is the plateau of Douaumont—a plateau on a plateau, rising 600 feet above the level of the Meuse. It takes its name from a little village of one street, which you will see marked on the map. About six hundred yards to the south-east of the village was the Fort of Douaumont, which had been dismantled for many months. Two hundred and fifty yards still farther east there was a redoubt, forming a position in the French line.

On that red, roaring Friday the Germans flung all their weight against the two ends of the French position—against Pepper Hill and the village of Douaumont. The French held lines a little on the south side of the crest of Pepper Hill. The big retreat of the night before meant that the enemy had to bring his guns forward and get new ranges; consequently the bombardment took time to reach its height. When the German infantry pushed up the steep ground towards the crest of Pepper Hill, it was scattered like chaff before the wind by the fire of "75's," machine guns, and rifles, and by the shells of heavier pieces on the ridge of Charny, to the west of the river.

Better success attended the Germans in the centre. Over and over again their attacks were crushed by the French gunners, but by three in the afternoon their infantry was swarming into the village of Louvemont. Meanwhile they were assaulting the Douaumont plateau, and though their men fell fast and thick, they gained ground. By nightfall they had occupied both slopes of the plateau. Again and again they reached its rim, only to be hurled back by the thin line of devoted Frenchmen. For a moment, about five o'clock, it seemed that the village of Douaumont would be captured; but a counter-attack removed the danger. The glory of the defence on that day must go to the 3rd Regiment of Zouaves and to the gunners.

It is impossible for you to imagine the terrible scenes of bloodshed enacted on the plateau. The following account by a French officer in an observation post will give you some idea of the awful slaughter:—

"Beyond, in the valley, dark masses are moving over the snow-covered ground. It is German infantry advancing in massed formation to the attack. We telephone through to the batteries, and the ball begins. The sight is horrible. In the distance, in the valley and up the slopes, regiments spread out, and as they deploy fresh troops come pouring on. . . . There is a whistle over our heads. It is the first shell on the way. It

falls right in the middle of the enemy infantry. We telephone, telling our batteries of their hit, and a flood of heavy shells is poured on the enemy. Through glasses we can see men maddened, men covered with earth and blood, falling one upon the other. . . . The first wave of the assault is broken. The ground is dotted with heaps of dead, but the second wave is already pressing on. It tries in vain to get through our fire. It is driven back, and again discovered by our guns; once more our shelling causes awful gaps in the ranks. Nevertheless, like an army of rats, the Boches continue to advance. . . . Then our heavy artillery bursts forth in fury. The whole valley is turned into a volcano, and its exit is stopped by the barrier of the slain."

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That day the new general arrived. His name was Pétain, and up to that time he was scarcely known outside military circles. He was fifty-nine years of age, with frank, clear, piercing eyes, a pink-and-white complexion, and gray hair. As a professor he had lectured very ably at the School of War, and had been much admired by his students. He was, however, a simple colonel, commanding the 33rd Regiment of infantry at Arras when the war broke out. Two months later he was at the head of a corps, and on October 30, 1915, he was leading the 2nd Army in the great attack that broke the German lines in Champagne. His energy was remarkable, and he made it a point of duty to keep himself in the pink of physical fitness. It is said that when he was stationed at Arras his landlord gave him notice to quit, because he skipped every morning in his bedroom and disturbed the occupants of the flat below. During the Champagne offensive he ran three miles over heavy ground at the head of his troops. He often challenged his brother officers to jump a ditch with him, and was frequently seen carrying little children pick-a-back.

All his energy, great as it was, was needed on the day when he arrived at Verdun. Before long he was the heart and soul of the defence, and his name rang throughout Europe. He left nothing to chance, but organized and controlled everything, everywhere. In the height of the heaviest bombardment he frequently surprised his officers by suddenly appearing amongst them in the most exposed positions. Sometimes for days together he took up his quarters in an armoured motor car, and sped at forty miles an hour from one post to another. He is said to have used up a dozen drivers in as many weeks. One of them said that he did not mind taking his chance of being killed in the trenches, but to drive the general was positively

asking for death. Wherever he went amongst his troops he brought cheer and confidence, and before long they were proud of him, and were ready to go anywhere and do anything for him. His sporting instincts endeared him to them, and they knew that whatever discomforts they were called upon to bear he shared them to the uttermost. The defence of Verdun ranks as one of the miracles of warfare, and the man who worked the miracle was General Pétain.

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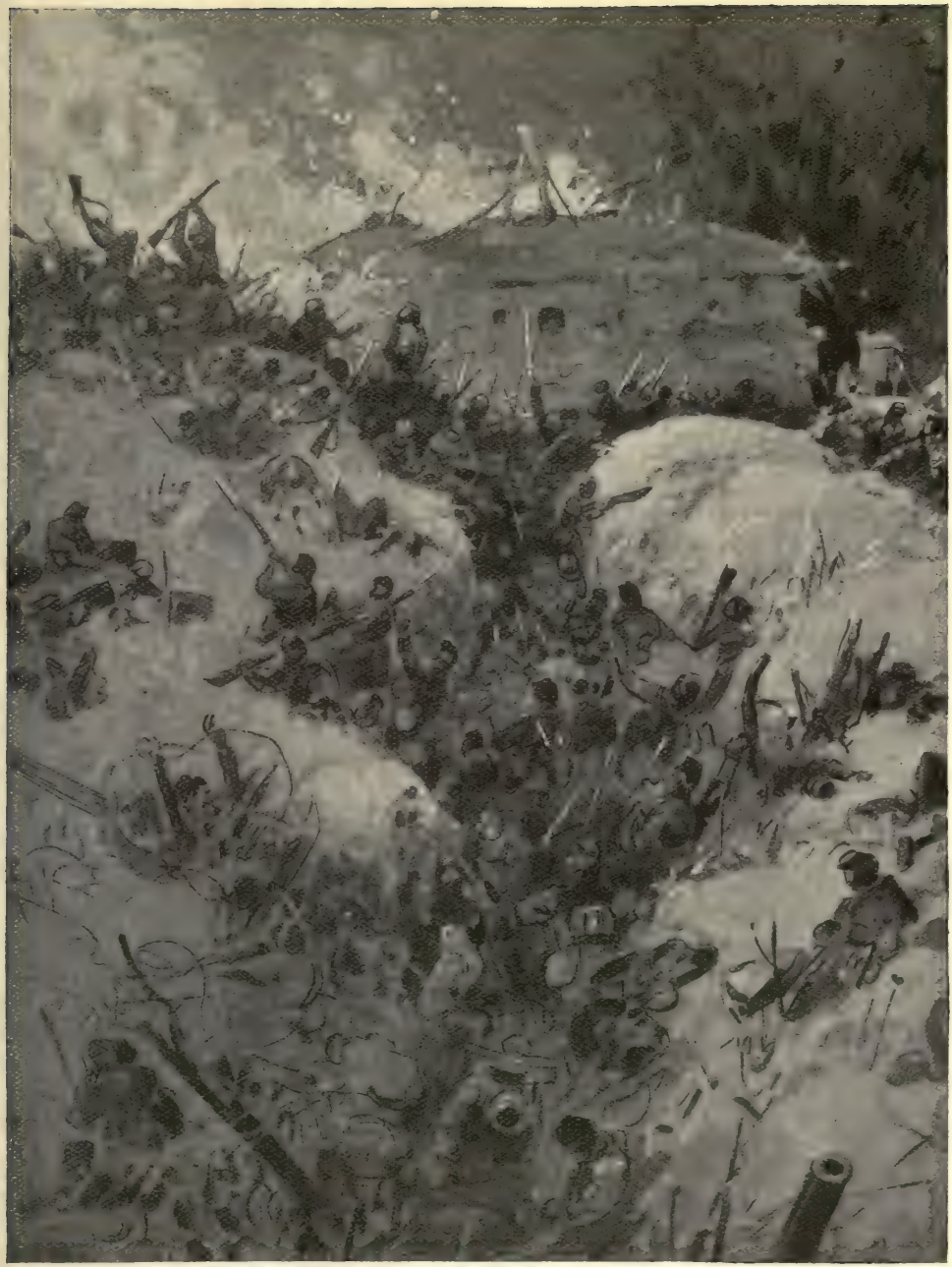
The new general did not arrive a moment too soon. The French army before Verdun had been beaten back four miles or more in four days, and the position which it was then holding was by no means strong. The trenches had been neglected ; gun positions had not been prepared, and the communications were poor. Reinforcements and supplies had to be brought over difficult ground, and more and more guns and more and more shells were required to cope with the enormous strength of the German artillery. Already the enemy was surging against the last position. If Douaumont fell, Verdun could not stand.

That night the frost was bitter, and the wounded lying out in the open died a merciful death before dawn. In the faint light of early morning both sides peering from their parapets saw what appeared to be dark figures crawling towards them. At first they thought it must be a night attack, but soon they knew that it was only an army of dead.

Early on Saturday, the 26th, the bombardment began again, and was especially fierce on Douaumont, the key to Verdun. The village was soon a welter of ruins, and shells fell fast and thick on the dismantled fort. The order had gone forth that Douaumont must be taken at all costs, and somewhere on a hill in the rear the Kaiser and his staff were watching through their glasses the gigantic effort now about to be made. Already Berlin had been told to expect the news; the flags were ready to flutter from every window; and the children at school were waiting eagerly for the holiday that the Kaiser granted them whenever he announced a so-called German victory.

The assault began. The 3rd and 15th Corps were seen advancing up the spurs and along the ravines. Soon they were on the slope of three hundred yards which lay in front



The Brandenburgers storming the dismantled Fort of Douaumont.

(*By permission of L'Illustration.*)

On Friday, February 25th, the 24th Regiment of Brandenburg broke into the fort of Douaumont after a series of fierce and costly assaults. The news was immediately wired to Germany, and the Kaiser received countless addresses and congratulations from public bodies, to one of which he replied as follows: "I rejoice greatly at the new and great example of Brandenburg vigour, and the faithfulness unto death displayed by the sons of that province during the last few days in the course of the irresistible assault against the most powerful fortress of the enemy." Despite this transport, all that had been accomplished was the capture of a dismantled and half-abandoned fort.

of the French position. Then the guns opened fire, and the shells crashed into the advancing men, who were swept away in the whirlwind of fire. Again and again they advanced, but nothing mortal could exist in that awful storm. It was noticed that the men in the front ranks moved forward with glassy eyes, as though they were under the influence of a drug. They were mown down, but behind them wave after wave rolled on, only to meet the same fate. About ten in the morning a wave mightier than the rest surged up the slope, reached the French trenches, and overflowed beyond the crest. The 24th Regiment of Brandenburg had broken the French front, but had not carried the position. To the west the French were still holding the village, and to the east the redoubt; the Brandenburgers had only thrust in a wedge against the old fort, and were now battling amidst its ruins. Nevertheless, the success was enough for the watching Kaiser. Immediately the news flashed along the wires that Douaumont, the last line of the French defence, had fallen. Berlin was in a frenzy of delight, but it rejoiced too soon.

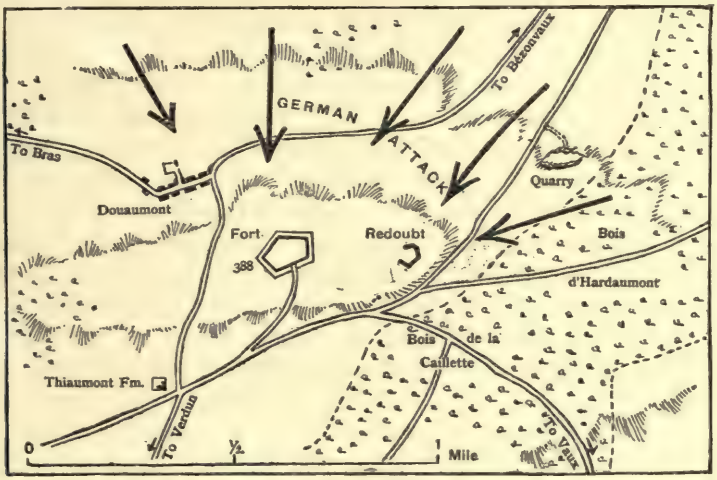
A mighty feat of arms had been accomplished, but it availed nothing. Pétain's plans were already yielding fruit. The wearied Frenchmen, who had been fighting for five days against fearful odds, had now been reinforced. The famous 20th Corps, which had crushed the flower of the German cavalry on the heights in front of Nancy,* had been rushed along the "moving platform" of the motor transport on the Verdun road, and had now arrived on the plateau. Fresh and full of ardour, it was launched at the Brandenburgers, who were pushed back over the rim of the high ground. Some two thousand of them, however, still held on to the fort, where they were caught like rats in a trap. Four times the fort was taken and retaken.

Fierce and terrible fighting continued until the 29th. The Germans flung themselves with fury upon the village of Douaumont, in order to make good the hold which the Brandenburgers had obtained upon the fort. The critical moment had arrived. The village was held, however, by one of the finest regiments in all France. Amidst the ruins the men lay in cover with rifles and machine guns trained on the advancing foe. The Germans believed that there was no living creature in the village; they thought that every defender had perished or

* See Vol. II., p. 218.

been driven out by their rain of shells. Imagine, then, their surprise when their appearance on the outskirts was greeted with a storm of deadly fire. The front ranks reeled with the shock ; they recoiled, and in doing so threw those behind them into confusion. Before long the whole advancing force had turned tail, and was hurrying panic-stricken to the rear. France and her fortunes had been saved.

The regiment which had thus opposed a wall of steel to the assaults of the Germans remained under fire for fourteen terrible days. Officers and men vied with each other in deeds of heroism. Wounded soldiers refused to go to hospital, or,



The Attack on Douaumont.

when sent to the rear against their will, insisted on rejoining their comrades as soon as their wounds had been bandaged. A colonel, to his surprise, found in the firing line an old sergeant whose white beard suggested that his place was away behind the lines. " What are you doing here ? " he asked. " Mon colonel," was the reply, " my son has been killed. I have come to avenge him."

An infantry officer who took part in the heroic defence of the plateau tells us that on the night of 1st March the Germans destroyed the French earthworks with a fierce bombardment, and at 1.15 in the afternoon attacked the village from the north and on the flank.

"The first Germans seen were advancing from the fort. They were wearing French helmets, and for an instant we hesitated. Our major shouted out, 'Do not fire; they are French!' He had scarcely uttered the words when he fell with a bullet in his throat. Another officer at once took his place and cried, 'Fire! fire! They are Boches!' Meanwhile the enemy tried to surround us and capture the village, but we determined to hold it to the last man. While it was in danger, a single company charged the German masses who were trying to force their way into our lines. There was a terrible hand-to-hand struggle. but at last we were overwhelmed by numbers. The last survivor of the company died still charging.

"The German troops at this moment began to move towards the south-west entrance to the village. . . . A captain at once took steps to check their advance, and a machine gun opened fire upon them. Out of about one hundred Germans scarcely twenty were left capable of retreating. . . . Under cover of the darkness we constructed barricades, and modified our front so as to oppose a strong defensive position to the enemy."

With this repulse the first stage of the Verdun battle may be said to have ended. The French, with a few weak divisions, had been assailed in a difficult position by enormous masses of the enemy, long prepared for the venture. They had fallen back yard by yard, selling the ground at a heavy price. The Germans had hoped to sweep away all opposition by one terrific onset, and had they succeeded Verdun would have been theirs within four days. The falling back of the French spoiled their plans, and forced them to proceed, not by one mighty blow but by stages, between each of which the guns had to be advanced to new positions, and a new bombardment undertaken before the infantry could be pushed forward to the assault. This gave the French time to bring up reinforcements, and to oppose the enemy with a strength equal to his own.

Nevertheless they had come very near to disaster. They had been caught napping, and it was more by good luck than good management that the key position had not been captured. Had the plateau of Douaumont been lost, large numbers of French troops would have been cut off, and Verdun would have fallen into German hands. The Allied front might not have been broken, but the Germans would have scored heavily. New ardour would have inspired their ranks, and neutral nations would have been greatly impressed. As it was, they missed victory by a very narrow margin indeed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

STORIES OF THE BATTLE OF VERDUN.

A *TIMES* correspondent, writing from "before Verdun, 4th March," tells us that the great German assault was intended to take place long before the day on which it was actually launched, but that it was delayed by spells of bad weather. He also tells us that things went wrong with the Germans in other ways. A Zeppelin that was to have blown up important railway junctions on the French lines of communication was brought down at Révigny.* On the evening of 21st February, the day on which the great guns began to thunder before Verdun, the stationmaster of Révigny saw a Zeppelin approaching. On a siding there were seventy wagons filled with munitions, and he realized at once that they would be a good mark for the bomb-droppers. A pointsman and a locomotive driver rushed up at his call, and within a very few moments all the wagons were speeding away from the danger zone at top speed. For their promptness and resource the three railwaymen afterwards received decorations.

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A man who saw the Zeppelin brought down describes the incident as follows :—

"The Zeppelin made its appearance suddenly in the bright beam of a searchlight. It was not more than 1,800 metres (6,000 feet) up, and it looked like a gigantic fish. Its nose offered a good enough likeness to the tapered head of a pike, and the pike's long body was represented by the carcass of the

* *Rey-veen-ye.* Thirty miles south-west of Verdun; an important junction on a main railway to Paris, with connections serving the French lines in Champagne and the Argonne.

dirigible. At short intervals I heard loud reports. These came from the batteries of motor guns which were firing on the airship. The Zeppelin seemed to pause, and afterwards for a few moments went forward again in a southerly direction. Then it put about, and sought to escape; but the searchlights and motor guns of Révigny pursued it, and the cannonade became more violent. Suddenly an immense burst of flame gushed upwards into the sky, and from all of us who were watching broke the same cry, 'It's hit!' In less than ten seconds the airship, a flame from end to end, turned on itself two or three times, and came whirling to the earth. While the blazing Zeppelin was falling, one of the crew climbed over the side of the car, slid down a rope, and fell to the ground from a height of 1,000 feet. He was dead when picked up."

It was the L77 which had thus been destroyed, and the gun that brought it down was one of the famous French "75's." "After something like twenty shots," says a correspondent, "the gunners got home with one which sealed the fate of the pirate craft. French artillerymen are not accustomed to hide their feelings, and their enthusiasm got the better of them. Some of them danced round the guns, embracing their comrades, while others gave vent to their joy in song."

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The French "75's" are such wonderful guns, and they played such an important part in the Verdun battle, that I cannot do better than give you a description of one of them. First of all, what is a "75"? It is a field gun whose calibre—that is, the diameter of its bore—is 75 millimetres, or nearly three inches. Its length is nine feet, and it is the best man-killing machine which the world has yet known. Formerly artillery fire was slow, and this was due to the fact that, after the gun was laid and fired, the shock of the discharge so upset the aim that the gun had to be relaid for the next shot. The French set the best brains of their country to the work of inventing a gun which might be fired again and again and not need relaying. The "75" which was served out to the French gunners in 1898 was the result. The old form of gun was attached to its axle-tree, but the new gun was fixed to a buffer in a cradle, which not only absorbed the shock of the recoil, but ran back the gun so exactly into its former position that no second laying was necessary. You can easily understand that the new gun

The Gun which brought down L77.

(*French official photograph.*)

You will notice that the gun is mounted on a motor, and is thus enabled to follow the course of the Zeppelin. It is an ordinary French "75." Private Pennetier, who fired the decisive shot, is seen seated in position just in front of the barrel.

could be fired much more rapidly than the old; indeed, it could discharge its shots as fast as the gunners could adjust the fuses to the shells.

If you look at the French "75"* you will see a cylinder beneath the gun barrel. This cylinder contains a combination of glycerine, compressed air, and springs which take up the recoil. The exact proportions of this combination are a secret which is most jealously kept. Many "75's" have fallen into the hands of the Germans, but they have not been able to discover the secret. The moment they open the cylinder the air escapes, and the secret with it.

Now that the French had made a very rapid-firing gun, the next problem was how to increase the rate of fuse-setting. Probably you know that if a shell has its fuse too long or too short, even by a little, it cannot do its work accurately. Before long the French had invented a machine which set the fuse exactly and very rapidly. The gunner pulls a handle like that of a beer engine, and with one clean, crisp stroke the shell is properly fused. I cannot tell you how this machine works, for its details are a secret.

The French had now produced a gun easily able to fire twenty-five aimed shots a minute; but they were not content with anything short of perfection. They gave their new gun an increased range by lengthening the barrel to nearly nine feet—an hitherto unheard-of length for a field gun—and they provided it with shrapnel and high-explosive shells, which raced away on their mission of death at a higher speed than had ever been known before. Then they invented a method by which they could get three different kinds of fire from the gun without relaying it. By means of a worm and wheel gear they were able to make the gun spray its shrapnel right and left, just as a field labourer swings his scythe when mowing grass. This they called "mowing fire." Next they fitted mechanism to the gun which enabled it—still without relaying—to follow up men as they ran towards it or away from it. Finally they combined this forward or backward fire with the "mowing fire," and so were able to spray any piece of ground so thoroughly with shrapnel that nothing mortal could live on it. Over and over again, not only at Verdun but on a score of other fields, the French gunners were able to destroy advancing

* See picture on p. 166.

columns by means of this dreaded *rafale*.* Were four battalions, massed in a brigade formation, to come within three and a half miles of a battery of "75's," at a range known to the gunners, they would probably be beaten flat to the earth in less than half a minute, and not a single man of them would escape wounding!

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Let us watch a battery of "75's" in action. The battery commander rattles off a string of words, telling his men their target, the range, length of fuse, angle of deflection, and so forth. While he is speaking, the gun layers are at work, and the fuse setters are punching the shell noses. Then the breech of each gun swings open, the shells are inserted, and "as the captain finishes on a sharp note of command, each gun, being laid on an axis parallel to its fellow, whizzes off a string of eight shells in two groups of four, and ceases fire. As the last shell leaves the gun the loader swings open the breech and stands easy. The whole process has taken exactly twenty seconds; and somewhere about two miles off there is a patch of mother earth the size of Trafalgar Square, every scrap of which has been so beaten by shrapnel bullets that there is no unprotected living thing on it."

Such is the French "75"—the pride of the French army, and the most effective piece of artillery known to man. It is said that the Germans strove hard to obtain the plans of the "75," and that the French prepared a set which were apparently perfect, and let their whereabouts be known. A German spy was allowed to steal the papers, but when his masters made the gun from them they found that it wouldn't work. The Germans had obtained possession of dummy plans!

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A French doctor, who describes the first four days of the fighting before Verdun, tells us that on the first day he was in the Caures Woods with a battery holding an advanced position. Behind the battery the Germans had created two or three zones of curtain fire, through which the supplies of ammunition had to be brought up and the wounded removed. This was done with wonderful calm and heroism. One gun of the French battery was damaged by a German shell, and had to be withdrawn to the rear. There remained three "75's," which fired

* *Ra-fah*, French word for a squall.

The Pride of France—French Gunners bringing a "75" into Action.

(*By permission of The Graphic.*)

This picture illustrates a battery of "soixante-quinze" guns changing position during a lull in the attack on the Verdun salient.

ceaselessly. As soon as the doctor had finished binding up the wounded and sending them to the rear, he lent a hand in passing up the shells. An 8-inch German shell passed between the legs of one of the men serving the battery, and failed to explode. A little later a 12-inch shell caught this same man as it rebounded, threw him over the gun, and landed him head foremost in a dug-out. The man scrambled out again, saying, "Doctor, I really believe I can't be hit."

Meanwhile the guns grew hot and tired. The man had gone back to his piece while the doctor attended to the wounded twenty yards to the rear. Suddenly the gun burst. Raising his eyes, the doctor saw two of the gun's crew dead, and the poor fellow who thought he couldn't be hit in his last agony. The burst gun was removed. There now remained two guns, one of which had a hole in its rifling, and the other had its brake smashed; but still they fired. The gunners were splendid; they stuck to their work as though nothing had happened. Then the Germans opened fire with their Austrian 4.1-inch guns, which are the nearest thing they possess to the French "75's." The result was awful, but nothing compared with the moment when the German machine guns began to play, for no cannon is so terrible as a machine gun.

The men were dead tired. The severely wounded were tied on to the empty ammunition wagons, and back they went, plunging in and out of the enormous craters which the German heavy shells had made. At last the German infantry advanced from the woods at a trot. "Our fellows," says the doctor, "fired until the enemy was within 300 or 400 yards. Then, not wishing to be caught, they retired. That was the worst moment of all. The men retreated foot by foot. It made one's heart bleed. The retirement lasted twenty-four hours.

"Then came a moment of mad delight. Our attacking corps appeared. On they came, with great speed and power. My poor fellows, worn out and lying flat, watched them as the torrent of men and guns rolled forward. They dashed onwards, never stopping, with wonderful spirit and 'go.' Never have I felt such joy. From that moment we all knew that the Huns were done for, and that their advance was stayed."

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A French soldier who took part in the fight at Ornes wrote as follows :—

" I have fought right through from the beginning. It was so frightful that I, who have seen my comrades fall almost with indifference, shudder when I look back. Battalions of the Germans advanced on us in close ranks—twenty men abreast. The shrapnel from our ' 75's ' and our heavy artillery rained on them. It was blood-curdling. You could see great gaps being made. It was as if a man had been passing through the German ranks with a scythe steadily mowing them down. Each time the shells exploded human fragments fell around us."

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One more story about the guns before I pass on to other aspects of the battle. An artillery captain said to a correspondent : " It was in the full height of the assault, and our guns had been firing round after round at the highest speed. After seven or eight hundred rounds the ' 75's ' became so hot that it was impossible to fire any longer until the pieces had been cooled. Our guns reached this stage of heat, and there was no water left except in the men's water-bottles. The men were almost dying of thirst, and yet of their own free will they refused to drink a single drop, reserving all the water in their flasks for the cooling of the pieces which were defending the infantry a mile or two away."

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When the Germans entered the village of Samogneux, two French companies of infantry holding some ruined houses were cut off, and had no time to retreat. Their leader was a young captain, who determined to die rather than surrender. Happily, the position was a good one. The Germans were exposed to the fire of the French machine guns, and the French could take refuge in cellars from the bombardment of the German artillery. Twice the Germans attempted to rush the position, but both times they were repulsed. The number of the defenders, however, gradually grew less, and their ammunition began to fail. When at last the captain saw the Germans preparing to make a third attack, he knew that it must end in the destruction of his little band. At once he sent off an orderly with a message to the colonel, saying that he meant to attack the enemy at three o'clock, but he hoped to be relieved before that time. If not, nothing remained but for him and his men to die for their country.

Slowly the time went by. At five minutes to three the

captain called his men together, and told them that when the hour struck they must attack the enemy. If help arrived in time they might be saved ; if not, it was certain death. " Let us, at least," he said, " show the Boches how French soldiers can die."

At the hour fixed he gave the order to attack. His men leaped forward to the fray so fiercely that the Germans were forced to fall back. Before they could rally for a counter-attack, French cheers were heard in the rear. The troops so long waited for were advancing, led by the orderly who had been sent to summon them. The men came up at a rush just in the nick of time, and enabled the gallant little band to make good its retreat.

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It is said that the Germans made no less than eighteen attacks on the village of Douaumont on 28th and 29th February before they entered it, only to be thrust out again. The French fully admitted the bravery of the enemy. " Not knowing that they were advancing to their death," wrote an officer, " they came on as if on parade to within twenty yards of us, and then rushed forward, crying, ' *Vorwärts !* ' A salvo from our machine guns mowed down the first line, and then the order rang out to charge with fixed bayonets. Terrible hand-to-hand fights ensued in the darkness. Frightful mistakes were made by the enemy. We found the body of a German officer pierced by German bayonets. An enemy company charged a section which was coming up to support it. The fight lasted till daybreak, when the approaches to Douaumont were covered with dead and wounded. We planned a counter-attack, which enabled us to gain a footing in the little redoubt north-west of Douaumont, from which the Germans were firing on us with machine guns. Calm returned in the morning."

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How the two thousand Brandenburgers were trapped in the fort of Douaumont is told in the following extract from a French newspaper :—

" Our counter-attack was carried out so rapidly that the unfortunate 24th Brandenburg Regiment, which is one of the crack corps of the German army, could do nothing but hide and take cover in the casemates of the old fort of Douaumont, where it found nothing but stones. To-day (29th February)

"You have the honour to charge!"

(*By permission of The Graphic.*)

In the great struggle that centred on Douaumont a gallant French officer gave the order to attack in these simple words: "My children, you have the honour to charge!"

this regiment is completely surrounded, and dare not come out. No doubt they are afraid of being shot by us; and they have good enough reason for believing this, as, before sending them to the assault at the very height of the battle, under the eyes of the Emperor and the Crown Prince, their commanders said to them, 'Don't forget that the French do not take prisoners.' When the position was recaptured, our men showed great enthusiasm. The generals commanding the reinforcing armies massed in the rear announced the success in the following words: 'The —— Corps has retaken Douaumont.' On all sides rose the cry, 'Vive la France!' Every band played the 'Marseillaise.' It was a moment of supreme emotion."

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One of the most thrilling adventures of the fighting described in the preceding chapter was the escape of a young lieutenant who was acting as observer to the artillery in a captive balloon high above the roar of the battle. Suddenly he discovered that the steel hawser connecting the balloon with the ground had been severed by a shell, and that he was drifting towards the enemy's lines. Thousands of anxious eyes were directed towards the little speck, which grew fainter and fainter as the southerly wind wafted it towards the German positions. Four aeroplanes at once started off in the hope of rendering assistance; but every one felt that the lieutenant was doomed. Minutes passed. The balloon kept on rising, and only the car could now be seen. Then suddenly a tiny, grayish speck was noticed to drop from the balloon, which shot up a thousand feet. The speck, instead of falling to earth, seemed to be hanging in mid-air. By the aid of glasses observers saw that the speck was a human body, suspended from a parachute. A mighty cheer arose when, twenty minutes later, the parachute descended into the French lines with the young officer safe and sound.

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His own story of the adventure is as follows:—

"I first knew that something had gone wrong when I felt a slight shock. I thought the telephone cable had parted. All at once I became aware that the other balloons were growing smaller, and I grasped the fact that I was adrift. A glance at my barometer told me I was already five thousand feet up. I tried to pull the cord working the valve, but it had become

entangled and would not act. I tried to climb up to it, but failed. Then I feared I was lost. My first thought was to destroy my papers; then I thought of blowing out my brains, to avoid falling into the hands of the Boches. At last, however, came inspiration. Why not try the parachute? I had to be quick, for I was now 11,000 feet up. The cord which was tied round my body was 65 feet long, so I had to jump that distance into the void before the box containing the parachute could open and set it free. For a few seconds I held on to the car by my hands. Then I let go. I must have dropped over a hundred feet before the parachute unfurled, and it was not an agreeable sensation. But after that I did not mind, and was able to look about me. When I was only 2,500 feet from the earth I became aware that the wind was carrying me towards the German lines. Then I seemed to lose consciousness. I rebounded three times before I finally landed, and discovered I was 300 yards from the enemy. I had been twenty minutes falling. I am only slightly bruised."

* * * * * * *

A correspondent * who visited the battlefield in the first week of March tells us that "Verdun lies in a great basin with the silvery Meuse twining in the valley. The scene is, on the whole, Scottish. Verdun, from where I saw it, might be Perth, and the Meuse the Tay. Small groups of firs darken some of the hills, giving a natural resemblance to Scotland.

"The town is being made into a second Ypres by the Germans. Yet as it stands out in the sunlight it is difficult to realize that it is a place from which the people have all gone, save a faithful few who live underground. The tall towers of Verdun still stand. Close by us is a hidden French battery, and it is pretty to see the promptness with which it sends its screaming shells back to the Germans within a few seconds of the dispatch of a missive from the Huns. One speedily grows accustomed to the sound and the scene, and can follow the position of the villages, about which the Germans pretend to mislead the world by wireless messages every morning.

"We journey farther afield, and the famous fort of Douaumont is pointed out. The storming of Fort Douaumont, as related by the German dispatches, is on a par with the sinking of the *Tiger* and the recent air bombardment of Liverpool. All

* Lord Northcliffe, in the *Times*.

the world knows that the *Tiger* is, as she was before the Germans sank her in their newspapers, one of the finest ships in the world, and that the air bombardment of Liverpool was imagined in Berlin. The storming of Fort Douaumont, gunless and unmanned, was about as important. It was a military operation of little value. A number of Brandenburgers climbed into the gunless fort of Douaumont, and some of them are still there, scantily supplied with food by their comrades at night. They are practically surrounded by the French, whose Headquarters Staff regards the whole incident as a simple episode in the give and take of war. . . ."

* * * * * * *

The same writer tells us that the prisoners taken by the French were miserable creatures, and that he could hardly believe that they belonged to a crack German corps. " One ill-favoured youth hailing from Charlottenburg * was barely five feet four inches high. Narrow-chested and peak-faced, he had the quick-wittedness of the town recruit, but seemed far better fitted for his stool as a railway clerk than for the life of the trenches or for the ordeal of battle. Yet he had been taken at the end of 1914 and sent to Flanders after six weeks' training, ' educated ' in trench-making for another month, then left to himself and his comrades as a full-fledged Prussian eaglet. Like the bulk of the other prisoners, he had been withdrawn at the beginning of February from the Flanders front and sent to the neighbourhood of Verdun. . . .

" Of one thing he and his fellows were heartily glad—to be taken away from the neighbourhood of the ' frightful ' English and nearer to the kindly French. From all the reports which these men had received from their families during the last two months, it appears that, in the words of one of them, ' there reigns in Germany considerable misery.' . . . The chief longing of the men, as of their families, was for peace."

* Town, province of Brandenburg, Prussia; on the river Spree, immediately west of Berlin. It contains a royal castle and a famous technical school.

CHAPTER XIX.

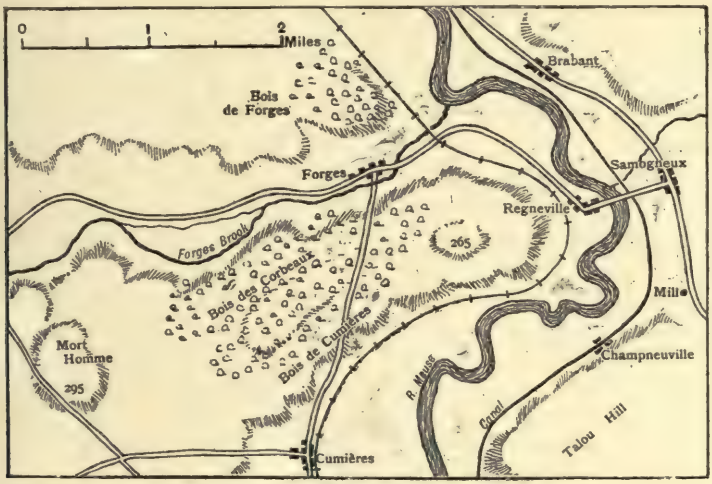
THE GOOSE'S CREST AND THE DEAD MAN.

AFTER terribly fierce fighting the Germans had failed, but only just failed, to carry the key positions of Pepper Hill and the plateau of Douaumont by frontal attacks. Why they failed still remains a mystery. Perhaps the wintry weather and the difficult upland country caused delay in moving the heavy pieces forward and bringing up supplies of shell. The French declared that though the Germans had thrown away life like water, they had not pushed on with that fire and resolution which would have swept away all opposition. The German troops had been told that the guns would do the work for them, and that they would merely have to go forward and occupy wrecked positions. When they were sent against positions which had not been destroyed, they seemed puzzled and dispirited. Another reason why the frontal attacks had failed was that the French guns on the left bank of the river had prevented the German right wing from lending proper support to the centre, and had forced the enemy to mass his men for the attack on a very narrow front.

At the end of February the German High Command came to the conclusion that its right flank must be cleared before the assault on the eastern bank of the river could succeed. Accordingly it sent many batteries across the river, and placed them in position amidst the woods. The new plan was to drive in the salient on the west, and to advance on Verdun from the north-west. If the French artillery on the left bank of the Meuse could be overcome and an advance of one mile could be made, the main road and railway communications of Verdun would be in danger. At the same time blows were to be delivered on the other flank. What the

Germans now proposed to do was to strike in from the flanks, and thus cut off the salient at its roots.

Perhaps you wonder why the Germans did not push through the plain of the Woëvre and turn the whole Verdun position by getting round to its rear. The reason was that the Woëvre is a very difficult campaigning ground in winter. It has a stiff clay soil, and when there are no frosts is covered with swamps and pools. The heavy guns and the transport could only advance by one railway and a few roads, and the troops could not easily deploy on the soft, sticky soil. Further, all the roads and crossroads by which they could advance were commanded



The Goose's Crest (Côte de l'Oie).

at long range by the guns in the south-eastern forts of Verdun. The plain of the Woëvre was impossible, so the Germans were obliged to attack Verdun from the north, the north-west, and the north-east, where the roads were good, the soil was dry, and the woods gave them shelter.

Find the little village of Forges, which I have already mentioned. On 2nd March the German guns began to attack the western part of the salient between the Forest of Argonne and Forges. The French lines on this side of the river ran behind the village of Bethincourt and up the narrow, marshy valley of the Forges Brook, so as to cover Forges village. I have already pointed out that the brook is formed by two streams which

unite near Bethincourt. Notice especially the more easterly branch, which skirts on the west a long ridge of hills, known as the Goose's Crest. The north-western slope of this ridge is thickly covered with the woodland called the Bois de Corbeaux, or Crow's Wood. The ridge sinks sharply to the Meuse opposite to Samogneux, and on the south side of it is the large village of Cumières.* Between the ridge and Cumières is the Wood of Cumières. At the western end of the Goose's Crest is the summit known as Mort Homme, or Dead Man.

You can easily see that if the Germans proposed to advance on Verdun from the north-west they must completely carry the Goose's Crest and its highest point, the Dead Man. If they did so, they would be able to keep down the fire of all the French batteries on the west of the Meuse, and would also be able to carry the Douaumont plateau by a flank attack. Further, if the French were driven off the Dead Man, there was no halting place for them until they reached the ridge of Charny, four miles away. The assault of the Goose's Crest was, therefore, decided upon. It was the key to the western bank, just as the Douaumont crest was the key to the eastern heights.

* *Coom-e-air.*

CHAPTER XX.

THE BATTLE OF VERDUN—SECOND STAGE.

ON 2nd March the Germans began a bombardment of the French firing trenches along the valley of the Forges Brook and the reserve lines on the Goose's Crest and the Dead Man. They also paid special attention to the Crow's Wood and the Wood of Cumières, in which the French guns were concealed. The railway which you see following the left bank of the river * was shelled, and was rendered useless. All transport was now dependent on the motor service. For four days the bombardment continued.

In order to prevent the French from reinforcing their line along the Forges Brook, a series of very strong attacks was made on the village of Douaumont † and on the hamlet of Vaux,‡ about a couple of miles to the south-west. Douaumont, now a heap of ruins, was captured; but no real success was won, for the French still held the higher slopes to the south. The village was, indeed, outside the position on which the French were making their great stand. The assaults on Douaumont and Vaux were only holding attacks; the main blow was to be delivered to the west of the Meuse. General Pétain was not deceived; he had guessed the German plan, and had made arrangements to meet it.

The long and heavy bombardment on the west of the river ceased at dawn on Monday, 6th March, and two German divisions moved out to attack the valley of the Forges Brook. They carried the first French position easily, for its right flank was "in the air." The Germans were already in possession of the opposite bank for three miles up to Talou Hill, and were thus able to assail the French wing with enfilading fire. The de-

* See map, p. 179. † *Du-o-mon* (*n* nasal). See map, p. 181. ‡ *Vo.*

Douaumont Village and Fort. [*By permission of The Sphere.*

Douaumont village is seen on the left, and the fort on a high mound to the right. The Germans obtained a footing in the fort on February 25th, and were in possession of the village on March 4th.

fenders fell back, fighting stubbornly, to their prepared position behind the Goose's Crest. By midday the Germans had taken Forges; before darkness fell they had won the eastern part of the crest, and had pushed their way into the Crow's Wood. Further, they had advanced along the railway, and were in the wood of Cumières.*

Next day, Tuesday, the 7th, came the first attack against the new French line. While it was in progress two successful assaults were delivered on the eastern side of the salient—against Fresnes † and against the redoubt in Hardaumont Wood. The redoubt was captured, and the enemy thus obtained a

French Position west of the Meuse on the Morning of March 6th.

position from which he could attack Vaux. The main fighting, however, was against the Goose's Crest. Thanks to a counter-attack, most of the Crow's Wood was won back, but elsewhere the French had to struggle hard to maintain their footing.

It is impossible for me to describe in these pages all the attacks which the Germans made on the French positions before Verdun. I should only confuse you if I did so. You must imagine the Germans as thrusting forward their men with the utmost ruthlessness day after day, and the French fire sweeping great lanes through them as they strove to advance. You must imagine the Germans, undeterred by their great sacrifices, coming on again and again; and finally, by sheer

* *Coom-e-air.* † *Frayne.* See map, p. 142.

weight of numbers, winning small parcels of ground, but making terribly slow headway. I cannot describe all this ebb and flow of the long-continued battle. I must confine myself to the outstanding incidents of the long struggle.

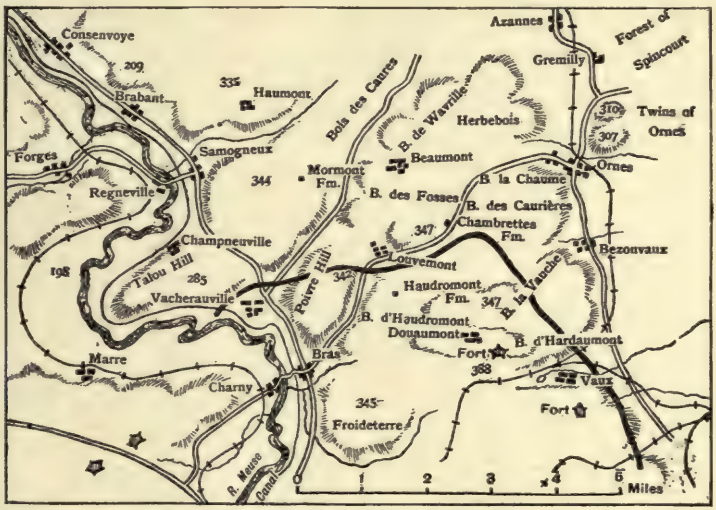
The most determined and most costly effort of the enemy in the early days of March was that made against the old fort of Vaux. Let me try to give you some idea of its approaches. Suppose you are standing on the plain of the Woëvre, say at the village of Dieppe. Looking up from the flats you see a small glen with steep sides crowned with clumps of wood. A road ascends the glen, and half-way up you see a straggling village of one street, with a church at the eastern end. This is the village of Vaux. To the north of it is the Hardaumont Wood, and from the high ground you catch a glimpse of the round top of Douaumont Fort. To the south-east of the village there is a bluff crowned by the old fort of Vaux, and surrounded by a wood.

When the moon had set, just after midnight on Wednesday, 9th March, a German brigade pushed up the glen towards the village. All the previous day shells had been flung into the little place, which was now a heap of ruins. The Germans thought that it was abandoned, and they marched jauntily up the glen, four abreast. A French officer who saw them said they looked as though they were out for manœuvres, and that they only needed their band to complete the picture.

Up the glen they tramped, until they reached the village. The French were lurking in the ruins and in the cellars, waiting with beating hearts for their coming. Suddenly from the holes and corners they let loose a murderous fire of machine guns on the advancing foe. As the enemy reeled before the storm of lead the waiting Frenchmen leaped out and plied the bayonet with deadly effect. Most of the attackers fled, and the remainder were finished off with grenades. At daylight the Germans returned again to the assault, advancing not only up the glen but up the steep slopes against the old fort. During the day they made attack after attack, but they were unable to make headway against the French guns. On the 11th they made their final effort. They swept up the glen, and took the eastern end of the village and the ruins of the church. From the fort, however, they were beaten back with heavy loss, and the wire entanglements on the slopes were thick with their dead and dying.

Though the fort of Vaux was entirely outside the sphere of fighting on these two days, the Germans boldly announced that they " had carried by assault the armoured fort of Vaux, as well as numerous neighbouring fortifications." They had done nothing of the kind; and later on they tried to explain away their lying statement by declaring that the French had retaken the fort—which, as a matter of fact, they had never lost.

While this fighting was going on at Vaux the Germans were making assaults all along the eastern side of the salient, but none of them succeeded. At the same time they were attacking the Goose's Crest. They were like a woodman felling a



Map to illustrate the Attack on Vaux.

tree by striking first at one side of the trunk and then at the other, but with this difference: while each stroke of the woodman's axe cuts deeper and deeper into the tree, the German blows glanced off. They had cut through the loose bark, but the hard core turned the edge of their weapon every time.

From Thursday, 3rd March, to Tuesday, 14th March, an almost continuous struggle raged between Bethincourt and the Goose's Crest. The Germans suffered very heavy losses; but they gained ground, and on the evening of Tuesday, the 14th, they made a great attempt to carry the Dead Man. Two divisions, numbering in all some 25,000 men, poured out of the

"We exploded a mine and occupied the crater." [*By permission of L'Illustration.*

Survivors of a French mine explosion being attacked by French infantry with bomb and bayonet. Notice the steel casques worn by the French in order to protect the head against shrapnel. Somewhat similar helmets were served out to the British about this time.

Crow's Wood, which was now in the enemy's hands. The division on the French left advanced from the Forges Brook and pushed up the slopes of the hill which you see marked 265,* while the division in the centre made directly for the same hill.

The centre advanced in five waves, and though caught by the French guns and checked, managed before nightfall to win two positions under the crest of the hill. At once a message was sent to Berlin announcing that the Dead Man had been captured. You can see for yourself that the news was false. The Dead Man had not been captured; all that had been won was an outlying spur 1,100 yards to the north-west.

On the afternoon of Thursday, the 16th, after a heavy bombardment another attempt was made to carry the hill. The French poured a terrific machine-gun fire on the flank of the advancing troops, and completely broke them up. Then their right sprang forward and drove the remnants back with heavy losses into the shelter of the Crow's Wood.

That same night the Germans made another effort to gain full possession of the village of Vaux, in which, you will remember, they had gained a footing. In the darkness five separate attacks were made one after the other. As the Germans crept stealthily forward the long beams of the French searchlights showed them up as clear as daylight, and the French guns poured a pitiless rain of shells upon them. All the attempts were in vain. Two days later, on 18th March, six other attacks were made on the village. In some of them the Germans used liquid fire, but even this hideous weapon availed them nothing. The six attacks on 18th March proved just as unsuccessful as the five attacks on 16th March.

With these failures the second stage of the battle, which had now continued for twenty-two days, may be said to have come to an end. On the west side of the Meuse the Germans had thrust into the French position a wedge less than a mile deep between the Brook of Forges and Cumières, but they had failed to carry the Dead Man, the key to Verdun on that side. On the east bank they held most of the Wood of Hardaumont, and they were in the outskirts of Vaux village; but the plateau of Douaumont still defied them.

* See map, p. 179.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE EBBING TIDE.

BY the middle of March it was clear that even if Verdun fell the next day it would have been bought at far too great a price. Had the Crown Prince been able to enter the city on 26th February, he would have startled the world with an object lesson of German might. Now it was plain that even if he won Verdun he would be in the position of a man paying a five-pound note for an article worth a shilling. He would have gained something, it is true, but he would have paid an absurd price for it.

A man may obtain much business by selling his goods below cost price; but if he continues to do so, he is sure to find himself sooner or later in the bankruptcy court. The aim of generals in the field is to inflict a greater loss on the enemy than they themselves suffer. If they gain a position not of vital importance, and in doing so lose more men than the enemy, they have really not gained a victory, but have suffered a defeat. The Crown Prince was now in this plight. He had already lost twice as many men as the French, and all that he had gained was a few miles of hill and dale. When the Greek general Pyrrhus * defeated the Romans in the year 280, and a friend congratulated him, he replied, "One more such victory, and Pyrrhus is undone." The victories of the Crown Prince were one and all Pyrrhic victories.

General Pétain, on the other hand, played the part of a cautious and far-seeing trader. He regarded the villages and crests of the salient, and even Verdun itself, as wares which the Germans could have—provided they were willing to pay his price. He had no particular desire to keep his stock intact; so

* *Pir'us.* King of Epirus (318 to 272 B.C.).

long as his balance was on the right side he was content. He knew that if the process continued long enough he would make a fortune, and the rash buyer would be ruined. He sold his wares bit by bit, but he made the enemy pay sometimes twice as much, and sometimes three times as much, as they were worth. When, however, he saw that a serious inroad was being made on his business, he did not hesitate to spend freely in order that he might not be obliged to put up his shutters.

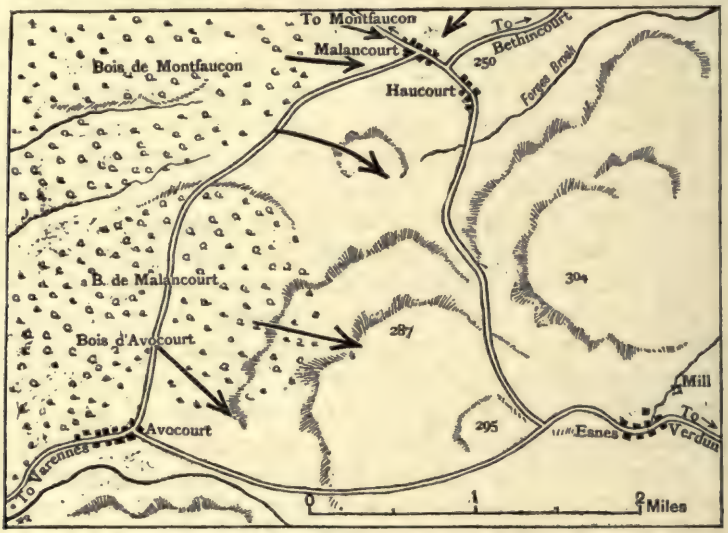
After the eleven fierce attacks on Vaux, which I described in the preceding chapter, a lull set in. So heavy had been the losses of the Germans that they were obliged to remain quiet while they reorganized their forces. The struggle for the Dead Man had cost them very dear. They had flung regiment after regiment against the position, and one after the other they had been horribly torn and shattered. In some cases as many as six out of every ten men who were hurled to the attack lay dead or wounded on the fatal slopes. Further, the Germans had used up most of the huge supplies of shell which they had accumulated for the great venture. They had been most lavish in their bombardments. It is said that on one point, 200 yards wide by 450 yards deep, they threw more than 80,000 shells in a single day! Time was necessary in order to procure and bring up fresh supplies of ammunition, and this delay enabled the French to prepare for the next blow.

Our gallant Allies had borne for three weeks the brunt of the mightiest onset ever made in the history of the world, and they were now full of confidence that the Germans could not now succeed. General Joffre in an order of the day told his troops:—

"Germany counted on the success of this effort, which she believed to be irresistible, and to which she devoted her best troops and much powerful artillery. She hoped that the capture of Verdun would revive the courage of her Allies, and convince neutrals of her superiority. *She had reckoned without you.* Night and day, in spite of a bombardment such as was never known before, you have resisted all attacks and maintained our positions. The struggle is not yet at an end, for the Germans need a victory. You will succeed in wresting it from them."

Germany now needed a victory more than ever, and she strove with all her might to obtain it. All attempts to carry the Dead Man by a frontal attack from the north-west having failed, she was now about to try a flank attack from the west. Find the village of Malancourt, which lies about two miles to

the south-west of Bethincourt. About three miles to the south of Malancourt you will see the village of Avocourt. The new advance was to be made between these two villages. The map shows you plainly that before the Dead Man could be reached by this route the woods on both sides of the road from Malancourt and Avocourt would have to be carried, and then the hill marked 287, and afterwards the hill 304. The latter hill, which is the key to the Dead Man, is not difficult to climb ; it descends in long, gentle slopes to the west and the



The Attack on March 20th from Avocourt.

north-west. If Hill 304 could be carried, the long-delayed victory would be won.

On the afternoon of Monday, 20th March, a Bavarian division made an attack with liquid fire on the Avocourt Wood, and managed to capture the eastern part of it. Fresh troops were at once brought up, and in spite of the ravages wrought by the French guns, were pushed forward to the point where the trees end and the hill pastures begin. The French lines on the west now formed a salient which the Germans meant to break through. All Tuesday they flung a curtain of fire to the rear of Hill 304, so as to prevent the French from bringing up reinforcements, and during the next three days they pinched the salient very thin. Then came a short period of calm ; but

General Pétain, the Hero of Verdun.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

A friend of General Pétain describes him as a resolute man of the most wonderful coolness. "While I agree that a leader should give his men an example of courage, perhaps Pétain may be reproached with exposing himself a little too much. He has a rare modesty, and his delight before the war was to go and rest at Cassis, on the shores of the Mediterranean. I have heard him say that we are carrying on a war of workshops, and that every heavy shell of which we run short may cost the lives of twenty men."

on Saturday the guns began to thunder again, and by Monday evening they were firing so furiously that the French knew they might soon expect an infantry attack. On Tuesday it came. Battalion after battalion was hurled upon the weak forces holding Malancourt. The French heavy guns opened upon them with terrible effect; but they pushed on into the north-west corner of the village, where bayonet and grenade fighting of the fiercest character took place for the next two days. The village, which had been furiously bombarded, was now only a heap of ruins.

General Pétain knew that the real danger-point was not the village but the wood of Avocourt, which the Germans were rapidly turning into a stronghold. The time had come for him to depart from his usual custom, and to make one of those rare counter-attacks which he only employed to win back really important positions. His men dashed forward with great spirit, and not only won 300 yards of the wood, but carried a redoubt which the enemy had erected in it. The Germans took the loss of this redoubt greatly to heart, and made four desperate but unavailing attempts to recapture it. They achieved nothing, and left mounds of dead before the French position.

Thus foiled, the Germans flung themselves on Malancourt once more. On the 29th they launched fresh troops at the ruins, and at the third attempt, which was made on the morning of Friday, the last day of March, won the south-west corner of the village. They were already in the north-west corner, and it was clear that the whole place would soon be in their hands. Pétain saw that the enemy had paid the price, and he therefore withdrew his troops. During the night his men retired very quietly to a strong position on the lower slopes of Hill 304. For several days the Germans did not know that the French had retreated, and continued to bombard empty trenches.

Malancourt was won, and Berlin rejoiced; but the enemy dared not advance, because the terrible French guns on Hill 304 and on the Dead Man commanded the bare little hollow in which the village lies.

Meanwhile the woodman was hacking away at the other side of the trunk; he was making another attempt to hew out a wedge at Vaux. Twice on Thursday his strokes had miscarried, and late on Friday night, when the French west of the Meuse were leaving their trenches at Malancourt to take

up their new position, he struck again, and at the second stroke cut into the middle of the village. From this point a road climbs steeply up a shallow ravine between the woods to the plateau near the old fort of Douaumont. On the morning of Saturday, 1st April, the enemy in four columns struggled up this road, but found himself in the same position as at Malancourt—the French guns held him. Next day, Sunday, he thrust 15,000 men into the ravine. Massed in the narrow glen, they were at the mercy of the French guns, and the hollow was soon choked with dead and dying. The carnage was awful, but the Germans pressed on over the bodies of their fellows, and entered the tangled, tumbled mass of broken beeches which had once been woods. They had won a real success, and the plateau was in dire danger.

Again Pétain saw that the hour had come for a counter-attack. On Monday, 3rd April, after a night of heavy bombardment, one of his divisions charged the wood, and after a fight which must rank as one of the severest of the whole war, thrust the enemy out of the scorched and blackened region and won back the whole of it, except a strip near to the Douaumont redoubt. The Germans were driven down the ravine, and all the western part of Vaux, which had been lost three days before, was recovered. No one will ever know exactly what the enemy's losses were on that day. The French lost heavily too, but even so, the profit and loss account was still in their favour.

Again the Germans rocked their attack to the other side of the river. While the battle was raging at Vaux they charged the empty trenches of the French under a fierce rain of shells. During the remainder of the week they made some small gains, and entered Bethincourt, which the French had abandoned. By Sunday, the 9th, they were ready for a supreme effort against the Dead Man. Two main attacks were to be launched against the hill—one from the woods between Avocourt and Malancourt by way of Hill 304, the other from the Crow's Wood directly against the coveted position. There was also to be a flank assault from between Regnéville and Cumières.

At eight o'clock on Sunday dense masses of Germans emerged from the wood of Avocourt. Instantly the French guns got to work, and the movement was nipped in the bud. The attackers were forced back into the shelter of the trees,

and there they were pinned. The first half of the grand attack had failed. Nor did the attempt from the Crow's Wood fare any better. The Germans were mown down in swathes. They paused irresolute for a moment, then ran, leaving the ground littered with corpses. Equally disastrous was the flank assault, for as the troops advanced along the flat riverside meadows the French shells caught them and destroyed them by hundreds. All the afternoon the attacks were repeated, and at length the Germans obtained a footing in 400 yards of the first line of French trenches on the lower eastern slopes of the Dead Man. There were a few other local gains, but none of them were important. Late in the evening, when the sky was lit up by a weird sunset, a Bavarian brigade suddenly appeared advancing to the assault on the extreme western flank at Avocourt. Some ground was won, but the French recovered it before darkness fell.

Still the battle raged, but by Tuesday, 11th April, even the Germans could not fail to perceive that they had failed, and failed grievously. They had used up nine divisions, and at every important point they had been checked and held. Thanks to the magnificent stubbornness of the French, every position essential to the defence of Verdun had been maintained. The Germans had boasted that they would be in the city in four days ; after forty-eight days of unexampled struggle and horrible losses, they were still battering vainly at the granite wall of the defence. All their carefully-laid schemes had come to naught, and thenceforward they seem to have followed no definite plan. The struggle was continued for months longer, but all the generalship had gone out of it. For the next three months the battle resolved itself into a series of wild rushes, with long spells during which nothing was done. Colonel Feyler, the great Swiss critic of the war, did not hesitate to say after the colossal failure of 9th April, " The French have won the Battle of Verdun."

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In your reading of these pages you must have noticed that the battles of the present war do not seem to come to a clear-cut, definite end. They drag on, and may only be said to finish when the fighting grows hot elsewhere. Even then they may not end ; but, as in front of Ypres and Loos, and in Champagne, may still continue, though on a lesser scale. There are,

signs, however, in every long struggle which show that the attacker no longer hopes for success. Such signs were evident at Verdun about the middle of April, when the Germans looked about for a scapegoat, and found it in the person of Marshal Haeseler, who was recalled in disgrace. The old general was sacrificed to save the face of the Crown Prince, and to cover up the costly mistakes of the General Staff.

Another sign was the changed tone of the German newspapers. They now told their readers that the Verdun battle had accomplished all that had been expected of it. Verdun had not been captured; but that mattered nothing, for the place itself was of no value. All that the High Command had set out to do was to take a heavy toll of the French, and make them use up their reserves. In this they declared that they had succeeded, and they published figures showing that the French losses were greater than their own. These figures were, of course, quite false. Indeed, they proved too much, for they showed that the Germans had captured more unwounded prisoners than the defenders had lost altogether, and not far short of the total number of troops with which the French were holding Verdun.

Though the Germans knew that they had failed, nobody who understood their obstinate temper supposed that they would confess their failure by withdrawing their troops for an attempt elsewhere. Again and again, even when the great Allied offensive, which began on 1st July, was in progress, they made frenzied attempts to hack a way into Verdun. On 6th June they managed to surround the heroic garrison which held the ruins of the fort of Vaux, and early next morning received its surrender. Ever since 21st February the fort had been the target of the enemy's heavy guns, and long before the end came it was merely a heap of stones.

For ninety days the fort had been directly attacked, and it was in the position of a ship on which the guns of a fleet had been concentrated. The defence of Vaux was a supreme example of the grit and doggedness which the French had everywhere shown on the salient.* Its capture was a feather in the German cap, and the French had lost an excellent observation station

* In July, at a special parade held in Paris, the Cross of the Legion of Honour was presented to Madame Raynal, wife of the defender of Fort Vaux, who was then a prisoner in Germany.

overlooking the Woëvre ; but the enemy had still many difficult positions to carry before the plateau of Douaumont was in his hands and Verdun was won. Meanwhile he was paying a terrible price for his small gains, and was exhausting his resources to no real purpose.

In the last ten days of June, after a long pause, the contest was renewed with a violence almost equal to that of February and March. Again, both on the eastern and the western bank of the Meuse, the French were furiously assailed. Again masses of men were hurled to their death, and only insignificant points were won. Still the Germans persisted in butting their heads against the stone wall of the French defence ; still they continued to sacrifice their armies in a hopeless task. Divisions were brought up from every quarter where they could be spared, and were thrust ruthlessly into the deadly storm of fire ; but even after one hundred and thirty days the Germans were as far as ever from attaining their object. Students of the war were amazed that the General Staff should continue this mad policy, and they came to the conclusion that the enemy dared not break off the struggle without playing into the hands of the Allies.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE GREAT GERMAN FAILURE.

ONE hundred and thirty days of struggle had gone by, and yet the fighting before Verdun had not come to an end. It will go down to history as the longest continuous battle ever known to mankind. When it began, the snows of February whitened the hills, and the woods on the heights were stark and bare. Days lengthened into weeks, and the fresh young grass covered the scarred and riven ground. Such trees as had escaped shell fire donned the livery of spring, while down in the hollows the almond trees gladdened the eye with their "fairy favours," and the lush meadows by the waterside gleamed with the gold of marigolds. Still the battle went on. Nature had awaked from her winter sleep to the promise of spring and the fulfilment of summer and autumn; on every hand she proffered her bounties for the life and comfort of man, but still the work of slaughter was unstayed.

It is easy to interest you in the battles of an earlier time. They rarely lasted for more than a day, and every moment had its incident. A long line of galloping horsemen, with gleaming swords and waving plumes, dashes down upon the enemy, and in one swift charge cleaves a way to victory; a thin red line of heroes rushes forward, and at the bayonet's point carries a position that ends the fray; stalwart warriors engage in single combat, and the victor rides off with the trophies of triumph—such are the episodes which made the old battles thrilling dramas. The Battle of Verdun had no such thrills. On an area of thirty square miles a million men stood to arms, but had you been stationed on the heights you would have seen none of them. All were hidden in holes in the earth. Save for the fleecy puffs of shrapnel bursting on the ridges, or the heavy

French Troops repelling an Attack on the Dead Man.

(*By permission of The Graphic.*)

clouds of black smoke that arose from high-explosive shells, you would have seen nothing. Your ear, however, would have been everlastingly assailed with the rattle of machine guns, the crack of rifles, and the dull, heavy roar of artillery. A modern battle appeals to the ear and not to the eye.

I must not close this account without paying a tribute to the splendid valour and the glorious stubbornness of the French during the long struggle. They had been tried as men had never been tried before, and they had borne the strain with marvellous doggedness. The Germans had struck them a blow which was meant to shatter their nerve and drive them in despair to make a separate peace. But, inspired by their love of fatherland, they refused to be disheartened, and presented a living wall, stronger than concrete or steel, to the foe. Through long days of awful weariness and torture, when the very earth seemed crumbling around them, they held their ground against terrible odds in the spirit of the Spartans of old. They were never so great as during those long months of struggle, when they stood at bay against overwhelming legions, and unflinchingly bore the brunt of warfare such as man had never known before.

Many of the defenders had vowed themselves to a glorious death. On a bombproof shelter these words were found:—

"My body to the earth;
My soul to God;
My heart to France."

When a captain asked for five volunteers for a perilous mission, forty of his men held up their hands, and were grievously disappointed when they learned that they could not all go. He selected those whose names began with the letter B, and they gladly marched off at his command. Not one of them returned. "What's the use of saving?" cried a group of warriors on leave in Paris, and spending their money freely; "we're Pétain's men!"

I have already told you that in such a battle as that of Verdun we must give the palm to the side which prevents the other from obtaining its object, and in doing so loses fewer men than its opponent. In June 1916 it was said that the Germans had lost 400,000 men; but even if their losses had been only half this number, they were double those of the French. The Germans had not attained their object, and they had paid a most ex-

travagant price for a few square miles of barren highland. If Verdun had been captured, and the French had been dealt a fatal blow, these losses might have been justified. As it was, the German resources had been squandered. This wasteful spending of men was the first and chief reason of Germany's failure.

Another reason was that she overrated the power of artillery, and merely used her infantry to occupy positions which her guns were supposed to have won. The Battle of Verdun proved clearly that infantry still remains the "queen of battles." Big guns may prepare the path; they may wreck all surface features and tear holes in the ground; but they cannot cleave their way through thirty or forty feet of soil or rock, and thus destroy the deep burrows in which the defenders take shelter when the bombardment rages in all its fury. When it slackens, and the enemy's infantry advance to occupy the wrecked positions, the defenders emerge from their underground shelters, and then comes the real tug of war. The man behind the bayonet decides the issue of the day. It was the splendid courage, zeal, enterprise, and endurance of her infantry that enabled France to maintain her hold so long upon the salient of Verdun.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SPRING CAMPAIGN IN THE AIR.—I.

" Last night I saw the monster near—the big
White monster that was like a lazy slug,
That hovered in the air, not far away,
As quiet as the black hawk, seen by day.
I saw it turn its body round about,
And look my way ; I saw its big, fat snout
Turn straight towards my face, till I was one
In coldness with that statue made of stone,
The one-armed sailor seen upon my right—
With no more power than he to offer fight.

* * * * *

" Oh, it was strange to see a thing like jelly,
An ugly, boneless thing all back and belly,
Among the peaceful stars—that should have been
A mile deep in the sea, and never seen ;
A big, fat, lazy slug that, even then,
Killed women, children, and defenceless men."

W. H. Davies.

ON the last day of January 1916 Zeppelins once more visited Great Britain on their mission of " frightfulness." About 4.30 in the afternoon six or seven raiders were sighted off the coast. On this occasion, for the first time, the Midlands of England were to be stricken. The Zeppelins seemed to have crossed over Norfolk into Lincolnshire, Derbyshire, and Staffordshire, from which county they circled back to the coast by way of Norfolk and Suffolk. Immediately they were sighted, news was flashed to all places which were likely to be attacked. Lights were extinguished, all train traffic was suspended, and fire-brigades were in readiness. The Midlands, however, were taken by surprise, and some of the towns which suffered most severely received no warning at all. After the raiders had done their deadly work, bitter complaints arose

from these towns, and the nation was once more impressed with the necessity of making a determined effort to obtain the mastery of the air.

There were two separate raids upon Staffordshire, the great industrial county of middle England. The first took place between eight and nine in the evening, the second about one o'clock in the morning. In all some thirty persons were killed in the county, and at least fifty persons injured. Some families were wiped out altogether; in other cases there were few survivors. A bomb fell at the feet of a man who was leaving his house, and killed him, while his little boy who followed him had an arm blown off. In one town the father went to a picture house, leaving his wife and the four children at home. The wife took the children to visit their grandmother, and when the father called for them on his way home he found grandmother, mother, and children, five in all, buried in the ruins of the house. Many other stories just as sad might be told.

The most tragic event of that night of horror took place in a mission room, where the sister of the well-known minister was conducting a service attended by about two hundred women and girls. A bomb fell between the mission room and the church; the lady who was speaking and three members of the congregation were killed instantly, while others were seriously injured. Elsewhere, a bomb fell on the roof of a theatre, and the people rose to their feet as though about to rush into the streets. At once an actor began to sing the National Anthem. The audience joined in, and all remained in the darkened theatre without panic or confusion until the raid was over. Close by, a service mainly attended by children was being held in a school hall. When the roar of the first explosion was heard, the minister began the hymn, "Jesu, Lover of my soul," and the children sang it through to the end.

The raid on Staffordshire was quite unexpected, and no preparations had been made to meet it. Leicestershire, too, was taken by surprise; warnings were only received a short time before the raiders appeared. In one Leicestershire town ten persons were killed, five of them being women and one a girl of sixteen. A soldier of the R.A.M.C. returned home on leave, to discover that his wife, son, and daughter had been killed. In Lincolnshire three persons met their death and seven were injured. In Norfolk and Suffolk little damage was

done. In all, about 220 bombs were dropped during the raid, and the total death-roll was 33 men, 20 women, and 6 children killed, and 51 men, 48 women, and 2 children injured. Except in one part of Staffordshire, no great damage was done to works and buildings.

The German report ran as follows :—

"On the night of 31st January one of our naval airship squadrons dropped large quantities of explosive and fire-raising bombs on docks, harbours, and factories in and near Liverpool and Birkenhead, on the iron foundries and smelting furnaces of Nottingham and Sheffield, and the great industrial works on the Humber and near Great Yarmouth.

"Everywhere marked effects were observed in the gigantic explosions and serious outbursts of fire. On the Humber a battery was also silenced.

"Our airships were heavily fired on from all directions, but were not hit, and safely returned."

This report was "hopelessly inaccurate." The Zeppelins had never been near Liverpool and Birkenhead. It was clear that they had lost their bearings, and had mistaken towns in the Midlands for the great ports on the Mersey.

* * * * * * *

The Germans declared that all the raiders had returned safely. This was untrue, for two days later the Grimsby trawler *King Stephen* (commanded by Skipper William Martin) saw at daybreak the Zeppelin L19 disabled and floating in the North Sea. The mate's account of the incident was as follows :—

"I was the first to notice the Zeppelin flashing a signal, and we naturally thought it was some vessel requiring assistance. We got in the gear and steamed to the spot. By the time we got there it was daylight. There were eight men on the platform on top of the Zeppelin, all of them waving and shouting to us. The greater part of the airship was under water, and about fifty feet of the forepart of the envelope was above water. In fact, the top part was as high as our mast. We had to go close up to hear what the Germans were saying. I counted eighteen men. The commander was in uniform, and all of them wore lifelines.

"From the hatchway they kept shouting to us in broken English, 'Save us! save us! We give you much gold if you take us off.' One of the Germans made as if he were going to jump overboard; but as he was a great height up he apparently changed his mind.

"The skipper and I talked the position over. We argued that there were twenty or twenty-five of the enemy, and only nine of us. Most of them would be armed, whilst we had nothing. We decided it was not safe to have them on board, because they could easily have overpowered us and taken our boat into Germany—that is, if they had not put us into

The Grimsby Trawler King Stephen alongside the sinking Zeppelin L19.

(*From a drawing by Montague Dawson. By permission of The Sphere.*)

our own boat and sent us adrift. So the skipper shouted to them that we could not take them off.

"Then they commenced shouting, and saying that they would not touch us if only we would save them. They kept screeching out, 'Save us! save us!' We thought the best course to adopt was to hurry away and report to the first naval vessel we met, and leave them to deal with the matter. As we left, some of the Germans, I am told, but personally did not hear it, shouted out, 'Gott strafe England!' and they shook their fists at us."

The mate was of opinion that as the sea was smooth there was no immediate fear of the Zeppelin sinking. Soon afterwards, however, half a gale sprang up, and then there was very little likelihood of the airship remaining afloat for long. The mate also said that the *King Stephen* could not have towed the Zeppelin, and that the whole fabric would have collapsed under the strain of a pull. When the news was received in England there were many to regret that the raiders had been left to their fate, but nobody was disposed to blame the skipper. He and his men were the best judges as to whether they could take off the crew of the Zeppelin without running the risk of being overpowered and sent adrift. It is true that the Germans promised not to touch them if they were saved; but who now dares to trust a German promise? While we may regret that the men on the Zeppelin were abandoned, we must never forget that they had just returned from a mission of murder, and that amongst their victims were twenty women and six children.

* * * * * * *

On 9th February two German seaplanes flew over the Isle of Thanet, and bombs were dropped. One of them fell upon a large girls' school at Broadstairs, but happily most of the girls were in the playing fields. One bomb broke through the roof, and fragments of a ceiling fell upon a class of young children, but only injured a little girl and a maid. Three other bombs fell in the school grounds. At Ramsgate a bomb fell close to a tram full of women and children, but no one was injured.

On February 20th there was a similar seaplane raid on Lowestoft; but though seventeen bombs were dropped, no one suffered death or injury, though there were several narrow escapes. At the same time a seaplane flew over Walmer; on the Kentish coast, and dropped four bombs, one of which blew in the windows of a church while the *Te Deum* was being sung.

Two men and a boy were killed, and a marine was wounded. In both cases the raiders were chased by British airmen.

On 5th March Zeppelins again appeared, and raided a large part of the east coast from Kent to Yorkshire. A heavy snowstorm was then raging, and up to that time it was supposed that Zeppelins could not fly in safety during such weather. This belief was now proved to be wrong. The raiders, probably three in number, visited Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Rutland, Huntingdon, Norfolk, Essex, and Kent; but the main attack was made on a Yorkshire town, where about twenty-five bombs were dropped from two Zeppelins, and seventeen persons were killed and fifty wounded. Six persons afterwards died of shock. Several houses were shattered, small fires were started, and the parish church suffered damage to the extent of £25,000. In one house a woman and her four young children, two boys and two girls, aged eight, six, four, and two, were killed, and the father was severely injured. The town was entirely without defence, and naturally the inhabitants were very indignant. The Zeppelins hovered over the place for about an hour and a half, and were quite unmolested. The total casualties for all parts of the area which the Zeppelins visited on this occasion were eighteen killed and fifty-two injured. Twenty-six women and thirteen children were numbered with the slain or were wounded.

On Sunday, 19th March, four seaplanes again visited the Kentish coast. They arrived over Dover about two o'clock in the afternoon, and did much damage, besides killing and wounding several children who were on their way to Sunday school. While the enemy was still in sight, British machines went up in pursuit. In one of them—a single-seated land-machine—was Flight-Commander Bone, R.N. He pursued one of the seaplanes for nearly thirty miles. Rising to a height of 2,000 feet above his enemy, he dropped down ahead of him, and, while firing rapidly, managed to get under him. The German pilot swerved his machine to the left before they met, and Commander Bone as he passed by saw the man hanging over the side of his machine, severely wounded. Then he brought his machine within fifteen or twenty feet of the enemy, and poured bullets into the seaplane until it began to drop, and smoke was seen issuing from it. Nevertheless, the seaplane managed to land safely on the water. Commander Bone was

now obliged to leave his enemy to the mercy of the winds and waves, as his land machine could not descend upon the water, and his engine was beginning to give trouble. He returned safely, and for his heroic exploit was awarded the Distinguished Service Order.

One machine which probably escaped the fight at Dover hurried to Deal, where it dropped bombs which damaged property, but did not kill or injure any one. On the same day, a little after two in the afternoon, two seaplanes dropped bombs on Ramsgate, and killed four children on their way to Sunday school and a man who was driving a motor car.

With the end of March came a period very favourable for Zeppelin raids. The nights were moonless and clear, and there was not much wind. The Germans seized the opportunity, and for several nights in succession they visited wide areas of Great Britain. By this time, however, we were better prepared to receive them. London had been equipped with a number of anti-aircraft guns of long range, and with many new searchlights. Everywhere the authorities had told the people what to do when the raiders came. Towns and houses were plunged in darkness, church bells were silenced, and public clocks were not permitted to strike. A system of warnings was arranged for the whole country, and at the first sign of the raiders trains were stopped, signal lights were put out, and engine fires were banked.

On the night of 31st March–1st April five Zeppelins came up the estuary of the Thames and struck northwards as far as Yorkshire. The Germans afterwards claimed that they had dropped bombs on the city of London between the Tower Bridge and the docks; that they had bombarded military camps in the north-west of the city; that various towns had been attacked, batteries had been silenced, industrial establishments had been wrecked, and fires raised. As a matter of fact, the Zeppelins never reached London at all, nor did they visit many of the towns mentioned in the report. They had travelled blindfold, and had guessed at the places upon which they had dropped their bombs.

As several of the raiders came up the Thames they were revealed by powerful searchlights, and batteries at once opened fire on them. In vain did the Zeppelins try to get out of the glare. The searchlights followed them, and the batteries did

not cease to fire, even while the bombs were dropping. One of the raiders was hit right in the centre, and its back was broken. As it fell it crumpled up, and finally fell into the water a little more than a mile from the Knock lightship.

Destroyers, mine-sweepers, and patrol vessels hurried up and surrounded it. It was discovered to be L15, rapidly sinking. Two officers and fifteen men of the crew climbed on to the envelope, and made signs that they were willing to surrender. It was said that they had left one young officer in the cabin, in order that he might blow up the airship when his comrades were rescued. The ship, however, was not blown up ; it sank.

A steam trawler took off the crew and carried them to Chatham as prisoners of war. Their leader was Lieutenant-Commander Breithaup, a young man of thirty-three, who wore the Iron Cross on his breast. The second officer was Lieutenant Köhne. Both officers seem to have thought that they would be shot, for the commander told the British officers who received their surrender, " I take all responsibility upon myself. My men are not responsible." Some of the men were barefooted and without coats. They were supplied with clothing, and treated as ordinary prisoners of war.

Certain foreign journalists were permitted to talk with the prisoners, who assured them that they had done much damage to British military positions. The commander declared that the killing of women and children was an accident. " You must not suppose," said he, " that we set out to kill women and children. We have higher military aims. You would not find one officer in the German army or navy who would go to kill women or children. Such things happen accidentally in war." When some of the crew were asked if they did not think baby-killing a sorry business, they replied, " We do as we are ordered."

The Zeppelins elsewhere came into the fire of anti-aircraft guns, and were pursued by aeroplanes, which, however, did not prove very effective. A young New Zealander, Lieutenant Brandon of the Royal Flying Corps, managed to rise above an airship and drop bombs upon it; but in other cases the raiders flew too high to be attacked.

The following evening, 1st–2nd April, there was another raid on the north-east coast, which resulted in much damage and the death of eighteen persons and the wounding of a hundred

The Crippling of L15 over the Eastern Counties.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

A triangular battery of anti-aircraft guns in a sleepy little village picked up the Zeppelin with its search-light and bombarded it. Several shells burst close to the raider, and at last one burst near the stern, smothering the vessel in smoke. She gave a convulsive shiver, shot upwards, and with her nose in the air drifted off seaward, to fall a hopeless wreck into the estuary of the Thames.

others. Again, on Sunday, 2nd–3rd April, six Zeppelins crossed the North Sea. Two raided the eastern counties of England, one the north-east coast of England, and three the east coast of Scotland. Never before had enemy airships travelled north of the Tweed. Shortly after nine o'clock news that the raiders were coming reached a Scottish east coast city, and householders were informed by the sudden lowering of their electric lights to a dull red glow.

A little before midnight a Zeppelin appeared and circled over the city for about forty minutes, during which time it was almost wholly unmolested. There were no anti-aircraft guns in the place, and it was at the mercy of the raider. Keen-eyed people could see the airship as a pale streak of light, and all could hear the bee-like drone of the engines. Then the bombs began to fall—a blinding flash, followed by a roar, as if a thousand tons of coal had been suddenly shot into a gigantic cellar. Some thirty bombs were dropped, but with a surprisingly small amount of damage and loss of life. The massive stone houses withstood the explosions far better than the brick houses of England. This was seen in a working-class quarter, where a bomb entirely wrecked a laundry of brick, but only blew a hole in the wall of the tenement which adjoined it. In all ten persons were killed, eleven were seriously wounded, and a dozen or two more were slightly injured. All the damage to life and property took place in the central and southern part of the city.

The most prominent building of the capital was furiously assailed, but the raiders only succeeded in blowing away a portion of the rock upon which it stands. In a neighbouring seaport a warehouse was set on fire, and damage was done to houses. The bomb which proved most fatal exploded at the foot of a tenement, in the common stair of which a number of persons had taken shelter, and killed six of them. In another part of the city a young man just of age was spending the week-end with his widowed mother when the bombs began to fall. He hurried out, brought in a neighbour to keep his mother company, and was about to do the same kindness to another woman who lived all alone when he was killed. The staircase of the tenement was blocked by the falling masonry, and the inhabitants had to be rescued by means of fire escapes. Elsewhere a bomb which struck the ground fifty yards from a house

drove a splinter through the bottom sash of a window, through a wooden shutter and two bedcovers, into the body of a year-old baby lying in its crib. There were, as usual, many narrow escapes. The raid on the capital seems to have been carried out by one Zeppelin. The other probably lost its way, for its bombs fell harmlessly in fields.

A Zeppelin which travelled through East Anglia that night dropped fifteen bombs into a little wood outside a small country town. Three fowls were killed, some windows were broken, and a roof collapsed—that was all. In another spot over a hundred bombs were dropped in a half-mile area containing two houses. In the north-east the raid was a failure, probably because the commander of the airship was entirely out of his reckoning. In a south-eastern county a Zeppelin was fired upon, and made off after dropping about a hundred bombs in uninhabited places. Such was the result of that Sunday night raid, which was meant to strike terror into our hearts. The airships which reached Scotland killed or injured a few dozen people, damaged a few houses, and set fire to a whisky store. Those which wandered over England lost their way.

Nevertheless the Germans announced that they had bombarded Edinburgh and Leith, with the docks on the Firth of Forth; Newcastle, and important wharves and buildings, blast furnaces, and factories on the Tyne.

The totally unprotected state of towns on the east coast of Scotland aroused much indignation, and before long steps were taken to give the raiders a warm welcome if they should venture to return.

On 5th April a district on the north-east coast which had been frequently attacked by Zeppelins received another visit. On former occasions the raiders had met with little or no opposition. This time, however, they were surprised to see searchlights flash out and batteries open fire. One Zeppelin strove hard to evade the beams of the searchlights, and to escape the shells that burst all around it; and at last, deeming prudence the better part of valour, made for the sea, dropping a few bombs outside the city, and slightly wounding a boy. The townsfolk were full of thanks and gratitude to the authorities for providing them with the means of defending themselves. In many other places guns and searchlights had been installed, and people were beginning to feel that they now had some pro-

tection from the terror that flew by night. Londoners declared that they were so well provided with guns and searchlights that the raiders would trouble them no more. Certainly no attacks were made on the capital during the first six months of the year 1916.

In the next chapter I shall describe the rising which took place in Dublin during Easter week. The Germans had planned to paralyze us during that week by attacks from the air, from the sea, and on our forces in Flanders. On Easter Monday, 24th April, a German aeroplane appeared over Dover, but was driven off without dropping any bombs. That same evening there was a Zeppelin raid over Norfolk and Suffolk. Three airships took part in it, but they seem to have been more bent on scouting than on bomb-dropping. Next night four Zeppelins raided Essex and Kent, but the explosion of two hundred bombs only produced one casualty. On the following night Zeppelins visited the east coast of Kent once more, but achieved nothing. Most of the bombs fell upon the marshes.

One of the airships dropped a bomb into a garden at the back of a house. The ground had been recently dug, and the bomb buried itself about two and a half feet in the earth without exploding. Instead of getting as far away as possible, the owner of the house filled bucket after bucket with water, drenched the bomb, and managed to extinguish the fuse. When taken to task for risking his life, he said he was not thinking of himself, but of the safety of the people in the surrounding houses. A clergyman who was staying in the house helped him in this heroic work.

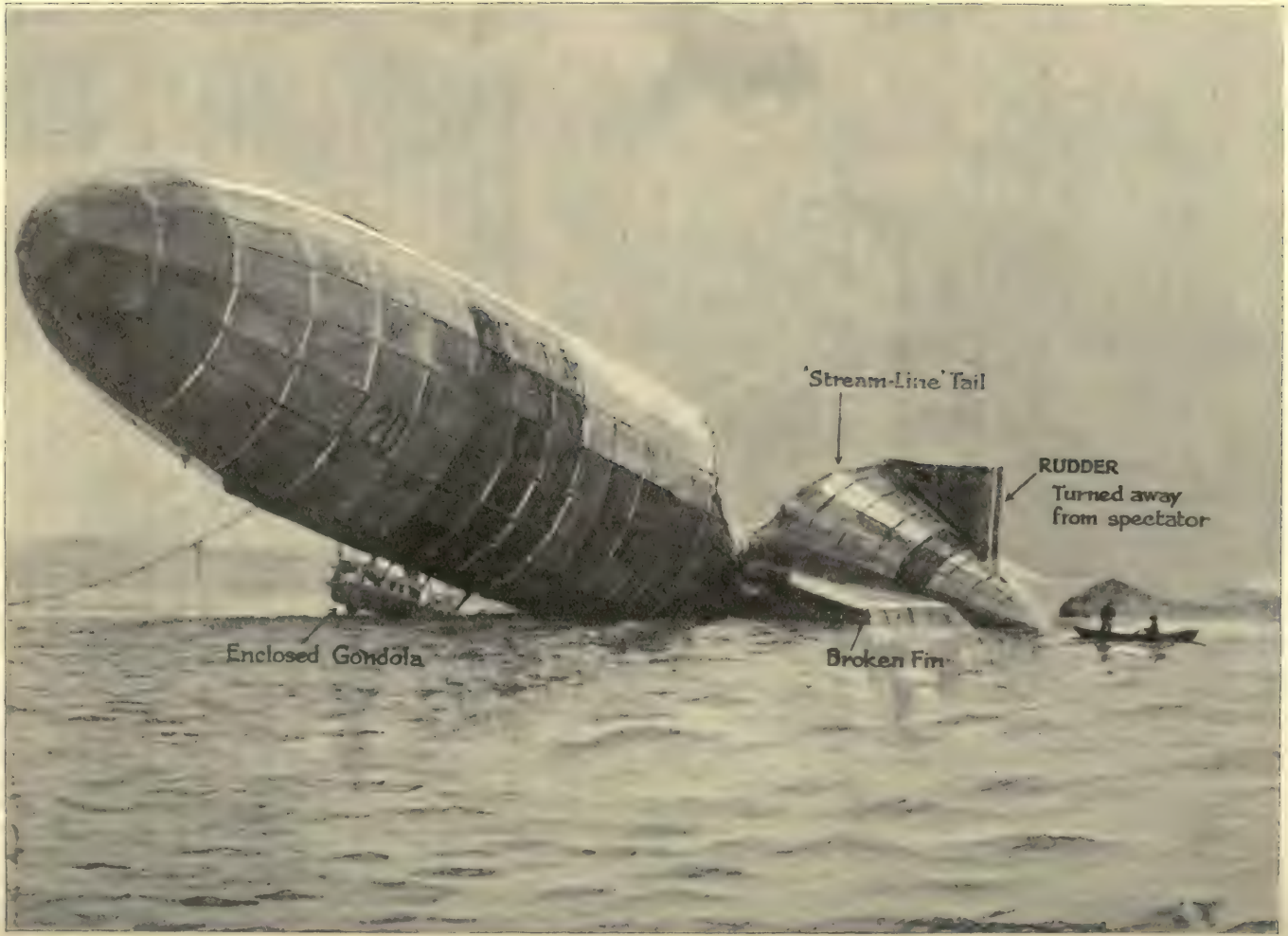
CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SPRING CAMPAIGN IN THE AIR.—II.

ON the evening of Tuesday, 2nd May, the Germans dispatched more Zeppelins to England than had ever before made the voyage at one time. They crossed the coast at many points—from Rattray Head, north of Aberdeen, to the north coast of Norfolk—but only two of them made a serious attempt to penetrate inland. Only in one district did they do much damage, and there the total casualties did not exceed thirty-six. L20, which flew northwards to Scotland, probably in order to attack Edinburgh, missed its way, and wandered on to Aberdeenshire, where it dropped bombs in fields and on moors.

This Zeppelin was destined never to reach Germany again. As it strove to return, a south-easterly wind arose, and snow began to fall heavily. Soon it was evident that the airship could not reach its base, and her commander decided to try to land in Norway. To add to his misfortunes, two British warships—H.M.S. *Galatea* and H.M.S. *Phæton*—appeared, and opened fire as they chased him eastwards. A British submarine, commanded by Lieutenant-Commander F. Feilman, R.N., completed its destruction, and rescued seven of the crew. Finally, the airship drifted on to the Norwegian coast, and struck against a hilltop, broke in two, and fell into a fiord. A torpedo boat rescued three men who still remained in the cabin, and subsequently a detachment of Norwegian soldiers fired on the airship from a distance of fifty yards and exploded it.

Thus ingloriously ended the last airship raid which took place during the first six months of 1916. Britain had now awakened to the necessity of air defence, and the raiders no longer plied their work of death and destruction at their leisure.


'Stream-Line' Tail
RUDDER
Turned away
from spectator
Enclosed Gondola
Broken Fin

The destruction of L15 at the mouth of the Thames, and of L20 as it crossed the North Sea, proved clearly that our anti-aircraft guns were effective and our gunners were becoming expert. During the week ending 6th May the enemy lost no fewer than three airships by gunfire. While, however, our air defences were increasing in number and power, the Germans had proved that no part of Great Britain was secure from attack.

Though we had made a considerable advance in our means of defence against raids, the nation was not yet satisfied that the Government was keenly alive to the importance of winning the command of the air. There was an important debate on the subject in the House of Commons during the second week of May. In the course of the debate Mr. Winston Churchill, formerly First Lord of the Admiralty, but then in command of a battalion, said that the Admiralty had acted wisely in not building Zeppelins, which he described as "frail and feeble monsters." In his opinion, aeroplanes and seaplanes were more valuable than airships. He thought that the best remedy for Zeppelin raids was either to attack the Zeppelins in their sheds, or to waylay them at some point overseas, coming or going. Our air service had suffered because it was under the control of two different boards—the one acting for the Admiralty, the other for the Army. He urged that the two boards should be combined into a single branch of imperial air defence.

The Government shortly afterwards announced that a Joint Air Board would be formed representing the two services, with Lord Curzon as its president. This Board would discuss all questions connected with aerial warfare, and would make suggestions to the Admiralty and the War Office. Should these bodies decline to act on the suggestions of the Joint Air Board, it was to report to the War Committee of the Cabinet, who would finally decide what was to be done.

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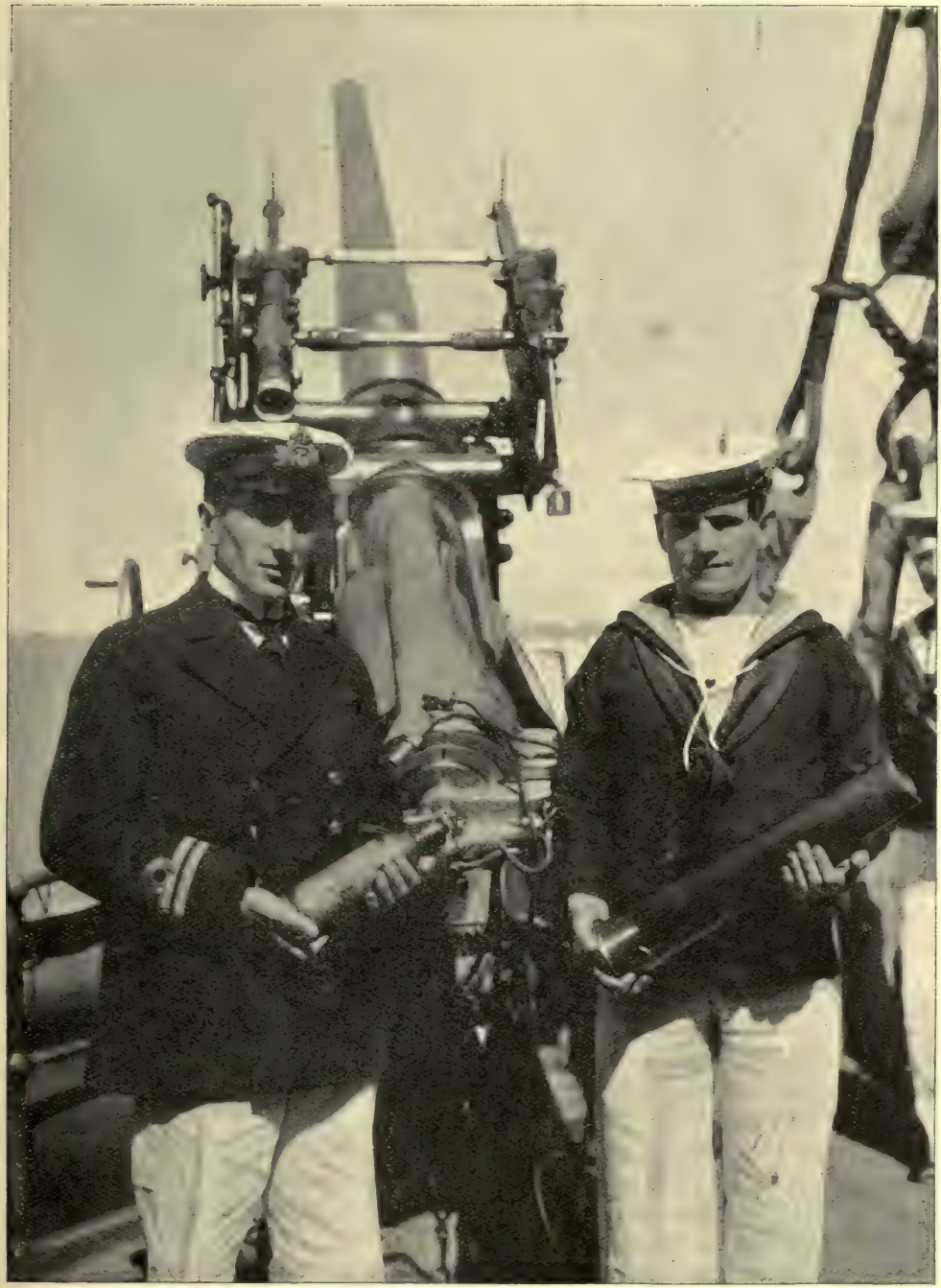
Before I close this account I must mention a success which attended our naval gunners in the harbour of Salonika. About two o'clock on the morning of 5th May the town was aroused by a warship in the harbour firing three red rockets, and men awoke to hear the familiar hum of Zeppelin engines. They were just able to distinguish the dark shape of the raider. A

few seconds later a searchlight caught it in its broad glare, and the silvery form of the Zeppelin was clearly visible for a full quarter of an hour. Then the anti-aircraft guns opened fire, and soon a hurricane of shells burst round the raider. A correspondent says :—

"The fire was excellent from the very start, and many of the shells burst very close to the airship, which remained practically stationary for some time. Precisely at 2.30 a shell appeared to the onlookers to strike the vessel and pass right through it, while at the same moment another seemed to burst right in the centre of the craft. Then a remarkable thing happened. Two blazing shells fell from near the tail of the airship, and it is stated that they were two fire-raising bombs, which had been dropped on it by an aeroplane, which had gone up immediately the alarm was given. Whether this is correct or not, the Zeppelin immediately afterwards seemed to be out of control.

"First it turned round to the left, as though to return in the direction from which it had come. Then it veered round to the right, with a decided dip in front. Another shower of shells burst round it, and a minute afterwards the searchlights lost it. For nearly half an hour people waited for its reappearance. The fire stopped, and the searchlights were put out. At exactly three o'clock a gigantic burst of flame, accompanied by a dull roar, lit up the horizon out to sea. It was the end of the raider. Apparently when the searchlights lost it, the aircraft, badly hit, fell rapidly to the surface of the sea. After lying in the shallow water of the Vardar delta for twenty minutes it either exploded or was set on fire by its crew.

"A few minutes later a warship was sending a flashlight message, and watchers could guess that it was announcing the destruction of the Zeppelin to the rest of the fleet and to all the stations of the Allied army. Soon after, cheering from the warships in the harbour could be heard. The news of the destruction of the raider was hailed with great joy at Salonika. The survivors of the crew, four officers and eight men, were made prisoners."



The Gun, the Gunners, and the Shells that brought down the Zeppelin at Salonika.

(*By permission of the Central News.*)

CHAPTER XXV.

HOW A TRAITOR WAS CAUGHT AND HANGED.

THE scene now changes to the south-western coast of the Emerald Isle—to the "kingdom" of Kerry—where the long, broken fingers of the land thrust themselves out into the Atlantic surges, and the salt water pushes up many a long creek to break against lonely mountains. On these wild shores, where nature has provided some of the finest havens in the world, few ships are to be seen. Save for fishing boats and the lumbering coasters that come and go with the tides, there is no sea-borne traffic to disturb the solitudes. Yet this Irish county, so deserted and so remote, was now to play a part in the great drama of the war.

The northern gateway to this romantic region of mountain and sea is Tralee, seated at the head of its bay, which is the most northerly of the Kerry fiords. A few miles from Tralee the strand is fringed by sand dunes, in the shelter of which there are a few small farms. On the morning of Good Friday, April 21, 1916, John MacCarthy, the proprietor of one of these holdings, rose between 2 and 2.30 a.m., and went along the sandy shore, in order to pray at a holy well about a mile from his home. About four o'clock he retraced his steps, and on his homeward way his eye was attracted by a collapsible boat which was waterlogged and was being washed in by the tide.

With the help of a neighbour named Driscoll he drew the boat ashore, but found nothing in it except a dagger. Looking around him, he saw on the sand a rusty tin box bound with cord, and the footprints of three people. He followed the footprints for about two hundred yards in the direction of his home, and then lost sight of them, but found them again in the yard of his house. Some time later he noticed his little daughter, aged

seven, playing with three Mauser revolvers, and his small boy holding a bag which had contained the weapons. The children had found them on the shore. At once MacCarthy sent Driscoll for the police, and when they arrived he took them down to the boat. On the shore they picked up two leather handbags, containing pistol ammunition, several maps of German make, a flash lamp, a large flag, two other revolvers, two lifebelts, and three coats. In the pocket of one of the coats was found a railway ticket from Berlin to Wilhelmshaven, dated 13th April. All the treasure trove was carried off to the Ardfert police barracks.

Does not this sound like the opening of a detective story which promises to be most exciting? What was the meaning of the boat drifting ashore with the tide, and empty save for a dagger? How came the revolvers, the tin box, the coats, and the leather bags to be lying on the sands? You may be sure that the neighbourhood was soon buzzing with the news, and that all who could throw any light on the mystery had an eager audience. Michael Hussey, a labourer, remembered that about 9.30 on the night before Good Friday he was walking along the shore after visiting a friend, when he saw a red light flash for a few seconds about half a mile out at sea. On the following morning, about nine o'clock, he returned to the shore, and saw the boat which MacCarthy and Driscoll had pulled up on the sand. It was exactly in a line with the light which he had seen the night before. He afterwards saw the same boat in the police barracks.

Mary Gorman, a farm servant, had actually seen the men whose footprints MacCarthy had traced. About 4.30 on the morning of Good Friday she noticed three men walking along the road in the direction of McKenna's Fort, an old Danish rath or circular earthwork, with a trench about nine feet deep, now filled with water and covered over with rushes. She was surprised to see strangers at such an early hour, and she noted them carefully. One was a tall man, who carried a knapsack on his shoulder and had a stick in his hand. All of them were walking quickly. They passed within a few yards of her as she stood at the gate of her employer's farm.

Now Police-Sergeant Hearn of the Royal Irish Constabulary, along with Constable Riley, arrives on the scene, and begins to search the surrounding country. They make their way to the old fort, and there, at 1.20 in the afternoon, Riley sees the "tall

stranger." At once he covers him with a carbine, and orders him not to move. The tall stranger walks towards him and says, "This is a nice way to treat an English traveller. I am not armed. I will do you no harm." Then up comes the sergeant, who gives the following account of the strange meeting :—

"'What do you do there?' I asked. He said, 'By what right do you ask the question? Am I bound to answer it?' I said, 'It is the only question I wish, and you have got to answer it. If you don't, I shall arrest you under the Defence of the Realm regulations.' I then asked him his name. He said, 'Richard Morton.' I asked him where he lived. He said, 'Denham, Bucks.' I asked him his occupation, and he said he was an author. I asked him the name of a book he had written. He said he had written a book on the life of St. Brandon.* I asked him what port he arrived at, and he said Dublin. I asked him if he had any passport paper. He said, 'None.' I asked him where he went to from Dublin, and he said he came through County Kerry and went along by Brandon. He told me that he arrived about eight o'clock, and I noticed that the lower portion of his clothes was wet. Then I arrested him and took him to the Tralee police barracks, where he was charged with being concerned in landing arms on the coast of Ireland."

Now let us hear what a schoolboy named Martin Collins, a very smart lad of twelve and a half, has to say. On Good Friday morning, while he was alone in a pony cart, he saw Sergeant Hearn near McKenna's Fort. With him were Constable Riley and a tall stranger. As the three men were leaving the fort he saw the stranger roll up a piece of paper in his left hand, which he was holding behind his back, and drop the paper on the ground. Sergeant Hearn then told him to drive the party to the barracks, and he did so. When he returned he went to the spot where he had seen the stranger drop the piece of paper, and saw it in the ditch. There was a little boy paddling in the water, and Collins sent him to get the piece of paper. He found that it was torn in two, and he read a part of what was written on it. He handed the paper to Constable Riley. The paper was afterwards discovered to be a German code, which contained such messages as the following: "Railway communications have stopped. Our men are out. Further men are needed. Further rifles are needed. How many rifles will you send us? Send another ship to ——" There could

* St. Brandon is the patron saint of the district. Mount Brandon, just across Tralee Bay, is supposed to take its name from him.

An Irish Prisoner of War in Germany.

(*By permission of the Illustrated London News.*)

"Why," asked Casement of the Irish prisoners of war in Germany, "do you stay here in hunger and misery when you might be enjoying yourselves by joining the Irish Brigade, and becoming guests of the German Government?" Those who refused to join were badly treated, and their food allowance was reduced.

be no shadow of a doubt that these messages were intended to summon aid from Germany.

Before the day was out the identity of the tall stranger was discovered. He was Sir Roger Casement, an able and cultivated Irishman, who entered the British Consular Service in 1895, and served the Government in various parts of Africa and the New World. In 1909 he was made Consul-General at Rio de Janeiro. Soon afterwards he was called upon to investigate a series of charges connected with the treatment of the natives who were employed in collecting rubber in Peru. He exposed the shocking cruelty practised on these poor people, and enabled the British Government to put a stop to it. For this service he was knighted, and when the honour was announced he wrote a most grateful letter of thanks, in which he begged that his humble duty might be presented to the King. He retired from the public service in 1913, and continued to receive his pension until the end of September 1914.

On his return to Ireland Casement took an active part in the Home Rule movement, to which I shall refer more fully in the next chapter. After the Ulstermen banded together and armed themselves, the Home Rulers did likewise, and Casement played a prominent part in the movement. When the war broke out he was in the United States, but in the autumn of 1914 he somehow managed to get to Berlin, where he played, as you will learn, the part of a renegade and a traitor. As far back as 1913, when he was in the service of the British Crown, he wrote the preface to a treasonable book, which was afterwards published by the German Foreign Office, and scattered broadcast through the United States. In this book he said :—

"The day the first German comrade lands in Ireland, the day the first German warship is seen proudly breasting the waters of the Irish Sea, with the flag of Ireland at the fore, that day many Irishmen must die; but they will die in the sure peace of God that Ireland may live. . . . I know of no way, save one, to make free the open seas—Ireland must be withdrawn from the custody of England and restored to Europe."

Such was the man who had served the British Crown, had taken British money, had been honoured by the British King, had professed loyalty and faith to his sovereign, but had now turned traitor, and, as the agent of Germany, had landed in

Ireland to head a rebellion. He had failed utterly. The moment Constable Riley covered him with a carbine in the old fort near Tralee his career of treason came to an end.

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He was taken to London, and was lodged in the Tower—the stronghold that has sheltered many traitors in the course of our history. He was next seen in a court of justice, where the story of his treachery was unfolded, and the mystery of his landing was cleared up. It appeared that in the month of December 1914 the German Government collected together the prisoners of war belonging to the Irish regiments, and gathered them into a large camp at Limburg. Then Casement appeared amongst them, and tried to get them to forswear their allegiance, and join an Irish Brigade which was to fight for Germany. Corporal John Robinson, of the 13th Field Ambulance, who was captured in France on August 24, 1914, but had since been exchanged, thus describes the efforts which Casement made to secure recruits for the Irish Brigade :—

"About a fortnight after my arrival at Limburg I saw Sir Roger Casement. He was dressed in civilian clothes, and went about the camp without any guard. He was spouting to the men about the Irish Brigade. About thirty or forty men were listening to him. He said, 'Now's your chance to fight for Ireland, to free Ireland.' Sir Roger wanted the men to form a brigade, and said that if Germany had a victory at sea he himself would land them in Ireland. Sometimes he got a very cool reception. On several occasions they hissed him out of the camp. One man shoved him, but the German guard protected him. He said that every man who joined the Irish Brigade would receive £10, and that if Germany lost the war all the Irish Brigade would be sent to America. . . . About fifty or sixty men out of the thousand men at Limburg joined the Irish Brigade."

A Munster fusilier told much the same story. He said that Casement asked the prisoners, "Why do you stay here in hunger and misery when you might be enjoying yourselves by joining the Irish Brigade, and becoming guests of the German Government?" The men who joined wore a silver-gray uniform, with green facings. Those who refused to join were badly treated, and their food allowance was reduced. A corporal of the Royal Irish Regiment said that the sergeant-major of the 4th Dragoon Guards shouted out that Casement was a traitor, and that for this he was sent to a punishment camp. "Some of the men," said he, "laughed at Casement, others

called him a renegade, and others said he was 'up the pole.'" A private of the Royal Irish Rifles said Casement told them that the Germans very much liked the Irish, and the Irish very much liked the Germans. He also said that Ireland now had the strongest Power in the world at her back. Those who wished to join the Irish Brigade were asked to sign a book. No one signed the book, and Casement was very much disappointed. "What are you Irishmen thinking of," he asked, "that you won't go and fight for your country at this time?" He told them that the Irish Brigade was first to help the Turks against the Russians; secondly, the Germans against the English; and then they were to go and shed their blood for their own native country.

Now that we know how Casement occupied himself in Germany, let us learn how he made his dramatic appearance in Ireland. The full story was told by one of his companions, a man named Daniel Bailey, of the Royal Irish Rifles, who joined the Irish Brigade, and was photographed in the uniform.

"I saw Sir Roger Casement about April 1915. He spoke to us about joining an Irish Brigade solely for the purpose of fighting for Irish freedom. I joined to see if I could possibly get out of the country. I signed on as D. J. Beverley. I was made sergeant straight away. About the end of March 1916 I was sent to Berlin. . . . On Tuesday, the 11th inst., three of us (Casement, Monteith, and I) were driven to the War Office. They gave me a railway ticket, and we got into the train for Wilhelmshaven. There we were put on a submarine, U20. She steamed out, but had to return, owing to an accident, to Heligoland. There we boarded U19, and came round the Shetlands to the west coast of Ireland. I knew now where I was going, but still got no instructions. I gathered, when near Tralee, that it was in connection with the volunteer movement. They steamed in as near as they could, lowered the collapsible boat, and put us off. When everything was ready we took in the boat, the revolvers and ammunition, etc., which you have found, and I was ordered to bury them. It was about 1 a.m. or later when we were put in the boat. When in the surf the boat was overturned, and we had to wade ashore, and I went back two or three times to fetch in the stuff. We buried the arms, etc., not far from where we landed."

Bailey then goes on to describe how he left Casement early in the morning, and was taken by Monteith to Tralee, and how he and Monteith met four men in a shop, one of whom was addressed as Mr. Stack. One of the men gave him a suit of clothes to wear, and took him along the road to a point where Mr. Stack and a driver met them with a motor car. They

Casement and Bailey in the Dock at Bow Street Police Court.

(By permission of The Sphere.)

got in and drove off. Then Stack asked Bailey if he knew where " Mr. Rice " was. That was the name by which Sir Roger Casement was to be called. Bailey said that he could not locate the spot where he was hiding. They then drove the car about the roads looking for the place. You already know that they could not find him, because he was in the hands of the police.

At the end of a road leading to the beach one of the tyres of the car was punctured. Bailey and his companions were challenged by the police, but were allowed to mend the puncture and drive away from Tralee. Several times the police stopped them and searched the car, but they did not arrest the men in it. That night Bailey slept in a lonely house, and next morning was told to go to a " castle " and " knock about." He remained there until he was arrested.

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While Bailey was on board the submarine he overheard conversations from which he gathered that a small Wilson liner was being piloted to Fenit (the port of Tralee). It was disguised as a timber ship, and had on board 20,000 rifles and over a million rounds of ammunition. There were also ten machine guns on board, as well as bombs. Bailey understood that Dublin Castle was to be raided.

Here we have a new feature in this strange case. A ship full of arms was accompanying the submarine which carried Casement and his fortunes. I will tell you what happened to this vessel in the words of the Attorney-General when Casement and Bailey were brought before the magistrate at Bow Street on 15th May :—

" On 21st April H.M. sloop *Bluebell* was patrolling in the neighbourhood of Tralee when she sighted a suspicious ship flying the Norwegian ensign, and having four Norwegian ensigns painted forward and aft on each side of the vessel. The captain of the *Bluebell* hoisted a signal demanding the name of the vessel and where she was bound for. The reply was that she was the *Aud*, from Bergen to Genoa. The captain of the *Bluebell* informed the vessel that she must follow him to harbour. The captain of the *Aud* asked in broken English, ' Where are you taking me to ? ' The *Bluebell* ordered her to go ahead immediately.

" The *Aud* remained without moving, and a shot was fired across her bows. Then the *Aud* asked, ' What am I to do ? ' She was ordered to follow the *Bluebell*, and was escorted by that vessel without further trouble. When the *Aud* was abreast of the lightship near Queenstown she hoisted a signal, ' Where may I anchor on arrival ? ' and received the reply, ' Wait

for orders, and continue to follow the *Bluebell.*' On nearing the Daunt Rock lightship the *Bluebell* headed for the harbour, but the *Aud* stopped her engines. The *Bluebell* went back, and when about a cable's length away those on board saw a small cloud of white smoke rising from the starboard side of the *Aud.* At the same time two German naval ensigns were broken at the mast, and two boats were lowered. The *Bluebell* fired one round; whereupon the two boats hoisted the white flag, and the men in them held up their hands. The *Aud* sank almost immediately afterwards, about 1¼ miles south-south-east of the Daunt Rock lightship."

On 10th May an Admiralty diver descended to the bottom of the sea, and saw through a hole in the starboard quarter of the sunken vessel many rifles and much ammunition. He brought up a rifle of Russian manufacture.

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By this time you have come to the conclusion that the traitor Casement was the stormy petrel of rebellion. You will learn in a later chapter that within three days of his landing Dublin was in the hands of rebels. He, however, thanks to the loyalty of an Irish farmer and the vigilance of the police, had been caught before he could do any mischief, and the same day the rifles, which Germany hoped to place in the hands of 20,000 disaffected men, were lying at the bottom of the sea. Casement's venture was strangely inglorious.

On 27th June and the two following days he stood in the dock at the High Court of Justice, charged with the crime of "adhering to the King's enemies otherwhere than in the King's realm—to wit, in the empire of Germany."

His counsel pleaded most earnestly and eloquently that the old law under which Casement was being tried only referred to traitorous acts done *within* the King's realm and not to those done outside it. He also tried to prove that Casement had only asked the soldiers to join an Irish Brigade for the purpose of resisting the Ulster volunteers when the war was over. In summing up, the Lord Chief Justice said that the old law referred to traitorous acts done both within and without the realm, and he pointed out that the men of the brigade were to be landed in Ireland after a German victory, and that it was impossible for them to fight for Ireland without fighting for Germany. He also asked how it was that Casement came to be in possession of a code which could only be used for the purpose of summoning aid from Germany, and how he came to be accompanied by a German ship loaded with

arms. Casement's treason was proved up to the hilt, and the jury had no difficulty in finding him guilty. The prisoner thereupon made a long address to the court, declaring the purity of his motives, and complaining that he ought to have been tried in Ireland. At the conclusion of his speech the judges assumed the black cap, and the Lord Chief Justice sentenced him to death by hanging. No evidence was offered against Bailey, who was clearly innocent of any wicked intent. He therefore was allowed to go free.

Casement appealed to a higher court, and again his counsel pleaded that the law only applied to acts done within the King's realm. The court, however, held that no matter where a man gave aid and comfort to the King's enemies, he played the part of a traitor.

On the day after the trial the King ordered Casement's name to be erased from the roll of knights, and at nine o'clock on the morning of 3rd August he was hanged in Pentonville Prison.

"*So perish all traitors!*"

CHAPTER XXVI.

DISTRACTED IRELAND.

IN the early part of the year 1914 the people of Great Britain and Ireland were sharply divided on a political question which brought them to the verge of civil war. For thirty years the Liberal Party had striven to give the Irish people the right to rule Ireland by means of an Irish Parliament. Those who favoured Home Rule believed that Ireland would become peaceful and contented if her people were allowed to govern themselves. The Unionists, on the other hand, greatly disliked the idea of breaking up the united Parliament of Great Britain and Ireland, and they feared that self-government in Ireland would bring about its separation from the British Empire. They also objected to Home Rule, because they had championed the cause of the Protestants who formed the majority of the people living in the nine counties of Ulster. The Ulster Protestants hated the idea of being subject to a Parliament which was bound to be largely composed of Roman Catholics, and they desired strongly to maintain their connection with the united Parliament sitting at Westminster.

In 1893, and again in 1912, Irish Home Rule Bills passed the House of Commons, but were rejected by large majorities in the House of Lords. The opposition of the House of Lords to this and other measures of the Liberal Government brought about a conflict the result of which was to limit the power of the Lords to reject bills passed by the House of Commons. A new Home Rule Bill was twice passed, and was twice rejected by the House of Lords. According to the new arrangement, if the House of Commons passed the Bill a third time it became the law of the land over the heads of the Lords. This occurred on May 25, 1914.

While the Home Rule Bill was being bandied from House to House, the Protestants of Ulster, led by Sir Edward Carson, began to prepare to resist the measure by force. An Ulster volunteer force was raised, and in May 1914 was said to number 100,000 men. Before long the Ulstermen decided that if Home Rule should be established they would set up a government of their own. The British Government now feared that the Ulster volunteers would seize army stores in Ulster, and a cavalry brigade then stationed on the Curragh was ordered to move north. A number of the officers of this brigade refused to march until they had received guarantees that they would not be called on to fight against the Ulstermen, and these guarantees were given to them by the Secretary for War and the members of the War Council. Many Liberals in the House of Commons were very angry at this proceeding, and described it as yielding to mutiny. When the Cabinet refused to recognize the guarantees in the form in which they had been given, the Secretary for War and two members of the Cabinet resigned. The Prime Minister thereupon became Secretary for War, and under his firm guidance the trouble with the army came to an end.

Sir Edward Carson, Leader of the Ulster Party.

Shortly afterwards the Ulster volunteers ran a cargo of arms, seized local post offices, and detained public officials. These acts of open rebellion caused great excitement in the country; but the Government allowed them to pass without punishment.

From 1907 onwards a spirit of lawlessness had gained ground in Ireland, and, unhappily, the Government did not put it down with a strong hand. There was a good deal of "cattle driving," and the law forbidding men to carry arms had been allowed to lapse. During the very serious labour troubles which took place in 1913 an agitator named James Larkin raised a "citizen army." There was in Ireland at this time an association known by the Irish name of *Sinn Fein*,* which means "Ourselves alone." Beginning as a society intended to encourage the Irish language, inspire the Irish people with greater self-reliance, and stimulate them to industry, thrift, and temperance, it passed into the hands of men who were bitterly hostile to England,

* Pronounced *Shin Fane.*

and were prepared to do anything and everything to overthrow British rule in Ireland. A group of Sinn Feiners, with the assistance of Sir Roger Casement and others, began to enlist a force of Irish volunteers which in July 1914 was said to number 153,000 men. The control of this force was taken out of the hands of the Sinn Feiners, and passed into those of Mr. John Redmond and the other leaders of the Irish Parliamentary party.

You now see that Ireland was divided into two armed camps. Everywhere men provided themselves with rifles, and drilling went on all over the country. The rival forces marched and manœuvred whenever and wherever they thought proper. At a great demonstration in Ulster Sir Edward Carson challenged the Government in the following words: "Give us a clean cut for Ulster, or come and fight us." By a "clean cut" he meant, withdraw from the control of any Irish Parliament that might be established the whole nine counties of Ulster. As the Roman Catholics had a majority in five of the nine Ulster counties, the Irish party was unwilling to agree to this proposal.

John Redmond, Leader of the Nationalist Party.

Civil war seemed to be on the eve of breaking out when the King stepped into the breach and asked the rival Irish leaders and certain members of the Government and the Opposition to meet at Buckingham Palace and try to find a way out of the difficulty. Several meetings took place, but nothing came of them. On Monday, July 27, 1914, only nine days before we declared war on Germany, the National Volunteers landed arms from a ship at Howth. They were intercepted in the streets of Dublin by a battalion of the King's Own Scottish Borderers and a small force of police, who attempted to disarm them, but in vain. As the troops were marching back to barracks they were stoned by the crowd, and some of them, without orders, so it was said, fired on the mob and killed three persons and wounded forty others. Civil war seemed to have begun. The Kaiser was quite justified in supposing that Ireland would soon be in open rebellion, and that Great

Britain would be so busy putting it down that she could take no part in the war which he was now about to begin.

Next day Parliament met, gravely disturbed by the news from Ireland. Early in the session Sir Edward Grey rose, and told the House that any moment we might be plunged into European war. At once a spirit of unity swept over the assembly. The trouble in Ireland was forgotten in the face of the far greater peril. For the first time in history Irish loyalty was pledged to the British cause, and this pledge was strictly kept by the leaders of the Irish Parliamentary party. Home Rulers and Unionists alike became recruiting sergeants, and, thanks to their efforts, Ireland furnished a large contingent of troops for service against the enemy.

The Sinn Feiners, who were furiously angry when the control of the National Volunteers was taken out of their hands, now cut themselves adrift from the loyal volunteers, and were joined by the citizen army which Larkin had raised. They obtained arms and ammunition in large quantities, and there was a strong suspicion that they were furnished with money from German sources in America. From the moment the war began the Sinn Feiners had done their utmost to prevent recruiting. They besought Irishmen not to fight "England's battles," and they said that the doings of the Germans in Belgium were not so black as they had been painted. The British army, and the loyal Irishmen who were bravely fighting abroad, were sneered at and reviled.

On September 14, 1915, the Prime Minister introduced into the House of Commons a Bill to suspend the operation of the Home Rule Act until the end of the war. He pledged himself to introduce in the next session an Act amending the measure, and further declared that Ulster should not be forced to come under the control of the Irish Parliament. This Bill was passed, and the Home Rule Act became the law of the land. Remember, the Act was not to come into force until the war was over, and was to be amended in order that Ulster might remain under the control of the Parliament at Westminster, if she so wished.

For the next six months Ireland seemed to be tranquil, and most Britons believed that she would remain peaceful during the great struggle. But all the while the Sinn Feiners were preparing for rebellion. They paraded openly; they

marched with arms on their shoulders through the streets of Dublin, and they even practised an assault on the Castle. The Government left them to their own devices, and seem to have been under the impression that they were not dangerous. They were, however, only waiting for the arms which the *Aud* was bringing to break out into open revolt. On 18th April came the news that Casement had been arrested, and that the *Aud* had gone to the bottom. The Sinn Feiners at once countermanded the order for a parade in Dublin on Easter Sunday, and the Lord Lieutenant thought that they had done so because they were dismayed at the news. Nevertheless, he asked the Secretary for Ireland to have the leaders arrested, and to order a raid to be made on Liberty Hall, the headquarters of the citizen army, and on other places where arms were stored. This was not done, and next day rebellion stalked the streets of the capital.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE SINN FEIN REBELLION.

THE morning of Easter Monday, April 24, 1916, broke cool and bright, and Dublin seemed to be in holiday mood. Away to the south-west the hills were a picture of calm repose ; but ere the day was half over madness and terror and bloodshed were rampant in the city. As the clocks struck the hour of noon, Sinn Feiners, many of them arrayed in a green uniform, and armed with rifle and bayonet, appeared in the streets. One party rushed towards the Castle, in the hope of taking it by surprise. The rebels shot down a policeman who was shutting the gate, and the sentry inside, but did not enter the City Hall, and newspaper offices hard by were seized, and from the windows the rebels fired on any soldiers who showed themselves. The attack on the Castle, however, was a half-hearted affair. Before many hours had passed, the guard was reinforced and the rebels were driven off.

Meanwhile other parties were marching through the streets, to occupy important positions in various parts of the city. It was noticed that by the side of each man walked a woman in uniform, carrying bandoliers well supplied with cartridges. Shots were fired, and civilians were killed or wounded. Before long the heavy stone buildings of the Four Courts on the north bank of the Liffey were occupied without resistance, and the General Post Office, with its massive front facing Sackville Street, was rushed. The entrances were seized, and the lower windows were smashed in. The staff was easily overpowered. The men officials, some of whom were secretly in sympathy with the Sinn Feiners, were made prisoners, and the women were turned into the street, which by this time was seething with shouting men and shrieking females. The telegraph

wires were cut, and Dublin was supposed to be isolated from the world. The telephones, however, remained, and by means of them troops were at once summoned from the Curragh, from Belfast, and from England. By a quarter-past twelve the green, white, and orange flag of the Irish Republic was flying above the Post Office, and snipers were firing at soldiers and police from the windows.

A sergeant in command of a little group of men tried to push his way in, but was shot through the head. A brave Scottish telephone girl who was in the building insisted on remaining to bandage his wound, and by so doing saved his life. All the scum which rises to the top when disorder reigns in a great city gathered in the streets and began looting the shops. An eye-witness * tells us that

"Shops of all sorts were broken open, and the goods freely distributed to the citizens of the Irish Republic. Men stripped off their old clothes and dressed themselves anew in the open streets, donning fashionable suits. Women selected jewels for their personal adornment, and rich and rare were the gems they wore on toil-stained fingers and grimy wrist. Watches were carried off heaped in aprons. Toys were given to the young. Fruit and champagne, and other expensive luxuries, were freely partaken of. The wines were in some cases retailed for a few pence the bottle. Book-shops only were free from attack."

The same writer visited the Post Office after it had passed into the hands of the rebels, and thus describes the scene :—

"It was a wreck. Glass littered deeply the path and pavement in front of it. Armed men stood behind its shattered windows. Useless barricades had been piled up within—mail bags, evidently filled with letters, to keep out bullets ; chairs and tables, through which bullets would pass almost as easily ! And peering out of their defences, the unhappy warriors threatened with their rifles the scared crowd. At one window a mere boy was still knocking out the glass with the butt of his rifle. Above the building floated a huge green banner with the inscription in white letters, 'Irish Republic.' Truly *Der Tag* † had come ! But oh, how pitiful ! Death, the sure and certain wage !"

In the south part of the city about two hundred rebels seized St. Stephen's Green, turned the people out of the surrounding houses, closed the gates, and began digging themselves in. Most of them were lads of seventeen or eighteen

* *Blackwood's Magazine*, July 1916. † "The Day."

Bird's-eye View of the City of Dublin, to

illustrate the Rebellion of Easter Week, 1916.

years of age, and they seemed to look upon the rebellion as a joke. In half an hour, however, all was changed. The red-headed ruffian who was in command called upon a driver to stop, and because he was slow in doing so, shot him. Then the rebels fired on all and sundry, and made a sort of barrier within the large gate facing the foot of Grafton Street. Soon afterwards they gained possession of a public house in the neighbourhood, and ran up the republican flag. Then the firing was wilder than ever, and many innocent and unarmed persons were shot. With the St. Stephen's Green party was the Countess Markievicz, an Irishwoman who had married a Pole, and was a well-known agitator.

The most unmilitary person, looking at the position which the rebels had taken up on St. Stephen's Green, could not fail to see that no German officer was directing affairs. No trained soldier in his senses would have shut up his men in an enclosure commanded by tall buildings on every side, from any one of which almost every corner of the Green could be commanded. A few days later, when the troops occupied the buildings, they easily drove the Sinn Feiners out.

Other points of vantage, such as Westland Row railway station and Jacob's biscuit factory, were taken and occupied by the rebels. The biscuit factory was a specially strong position, and it had the further advantage of being stocked with enormous quantities of food. It had its own water supply and its own gas and electric light plant. The rebels closely guarded all roads leading to the city, and allowed no one to enter or leave without a pass. An attempt to cut the Great Northern Railway, at a point about twelve miles from the city, failed.

There was, however, a most important position which the rebels did not attempt to seize. If you look at the plan on pages 232, 233, you will notice that one long street, bearing different names, runs from St. Stephen's Green to the O'Connell Bridge, and then onwards past the Post Office. Almost midway between the Green and the river is Trinity College, the university of Swift, Goldsmith, and Burke. Its grounds cover thirty-five acres, and it contains a number of very fine buildings, including a School of Engineering which Ruskin thought to be the most beautiful structure of its kind in the world. The great library receives a copy of every book published, and is filled

with priceless treasures, including the Book of Kells * and the harp of Brian Boru.† The great stone front of the college faces College Green ; to the left is Grafton Street, leading to St. Stephen's Green ; to the right is Westmoreland Street, leading to Sackville Street ; and in front is Dame Street, leading up to the Castle. The college buildings and grounds, which were held by thirty-six members of the Officers' Training Corps, assisted by eight Anzacs home on leave, thus formed a sort of loyal stronghold, dividing the forces of the enemy, and keeping open the principal streets of the city for the passage of troops. Though death and tumult raged in the streets, and some of the students were in arms, examinations in the College went on as usual.

In the course of the afternoon the rebels issued a proclamation, calling upon the people of Ireland in the name of God to strike for freedom, and announcing the setting up of an Irish republic. This precious document was signed by eight of the leaders, some of whom were men of education and position. One was a poet, another a university professor, and some of them held government appointments. Pearse, the commander-in-chief, was the head of a boarding-school which was little better than a nursery of rebels ; and Connolly, the commandant-general, was a wild agitator who had played a large part in the serious labour troubles of 1913–14.

When the revolt began there were but few troops in the city, and they could barely hold the barracks in which they were stationed. The biggest fight on Monday took place near the Portobello Barracks. The rebels had installed themselves in a public-house which commanded the road to the barracks, and it was essential that they should be cleared out. A detachment of soldiers armed with machine guns and rifles rushed to the attack, but was met with a strong resistance. A priest ran in between the two sides, hoping that his presence would bring the rebels to reason. He was, however, shot down by their fire. After they had used up their ammunition they plied whisky and porter bottles as weapons. Finally, however, the position was captured.

* A beautifully illuminated copy of the gospels, dating from the eighth century.

† King of Ireland, slain at the battle of Clontarf, fought against the Danes in 1014.

Sackville Street before the Rebellion.

On Monday evening soldiers arrived from the Curragh, and next morning they were joined by others from Belfast, and later on by the Sherwood Foresters and other troops from England. Martial law was proclaimed throughout the country, and the city was surrounded. From the roof of Trinity College the Anzacs and the members of the Officers' Training Corps maintained a very accurate fire, and played a large part in saving the city. They not only prevented the rebels from seizing the Bank of Ireland (formerly the Irish House of Parliament), which fronts College Green, but they kept Dame Street, Grafton Street, and Westmoreland Street clear, and even fired on the strongholds of the enemy in Sackville Street.

The greatest danger was from the snipers lurking in the houses. Early on Tuesday the Shelbourne Hotel, which overlooks St. Stephen's Green, was easily recaptured, and from its roof machine guns began to play upon the trenches. The great event of the day, however, was the capture of the *Daily Express* offices near to the Castle. A terrific fire was directed against the building, and under cover of it the soldiers tried to rush the position. Several fell during the attack, and there was fierce hand-to-hand fighting in the narrow passages of the newspaper offices. Finally, however, the rebels were bombed out.

Attempts to carry rebel strongholds by storm proved very expensive, for the men advancing to the attack were fired on from all quarters. The writer already quoted says :—

"Not a few of the men told me that they would prefer being at the Front. At the Front, they said, you know the direction from which you may expect a bullet. Here the enemy is all round you. He lurks in dark passages and among chimney stacks, and when at last you have hunted him down, you find you have got hold of a peaceful citizen who gives you some good reason for his presence."

A far more speedy and less expensive method was adopted as soon as the artillery arrived. On Wednesday morning Liberty Hall, the headquarters of the so-called citizen army, was marked out for destruction. H.M.S. *Helga* steamed up the Liffey, and, at fifty yards' range, bombarded the building. Meanwhile two 18-pounders also opened fire.

"The noise was tremendous. To the general din was added the spitting of a machine gun placed high on the tower of the Fire Brigade station.

When next I saw Liberty Hall its empty shell alone remained. Every floor had been blown out of it. It was stated that none of the rebels had remained to face the attack. A few weeks ago I saw armed men keeping guard within this building to keep out the police; and this was known to, and suffered by, the authorities."

Damage was, of course, done to buildings in Sackville Street by the bombardment. A few shells fell on the Post Office, and soon the building was in flames. About two hundred rebels, including Pearse, the commander-in-chief, put up a white flag and surrendered. Others who tried to make a dash for freedom were mown down by machine guns. In order to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, the military now granted a truce, to enable the rest of the rebels in the Post Office to yield. At half-past six, when the truce expired, there were no more surrenders, so the shooting began again.

By Thursday morning the people were starving. Food supplies had failed, and most of the shops were closed. "Wages had ceased, for there were no employers, and no work to do. But wages would not have helped; there was nothing to buy." The military now took the matter in hand. They seized stores, opened warehouses, and distributed food to the starving people, who showed themselves very grateful to the soldiers.

Another enemy stronghold was destroyed by shell fire that day, and at nightfall the flames of burning buildings lighted up the sky.

"All this Thursday night firing continued, sometimes breaking out in one direction, sometimes in another. The vicious rattle of Maxims, and the tap, tap, tap of some quick-firer—wickedest sound of all—mingled every now and again with the crash of bombs and filled the night with a sense of horror and danger. The streets were in many places barricaded, and no one was permitted to pass. Indeed, only the military were now to be seen on the streets."

Though the situation had still "serious features," and the rebels were still holding strong positions, the soldiers were rapidly gaining the upper hand. On Friday it was clear, even to the most ignorant and reckless of the rebels, that the game was up. The Sinn Feiners in the Post Office were finally disposed of, and on Saturday, after an armistice of three hours, the following notice, signed by Pearse, was posted up :—

"In order to prevent further slaughter of unarmed people, and in the hope of saving the lives of our followers, now surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered, members of the provisional government at present at headquarters have agreed to unconditional surrender, and the commanders of all units of the republican forces will order their followers to lay down their arms."

Pearse, you will remember, had already surrendered; and Connolly, who had been wounded, was a prisoner.

Late on Saturday night the writer from whom I have quoted so freely in this chapter ascended to the top of the lookout tower of the Fire Brigade station.

"The view northward was sublime and terrible. Acres of flame and red-hot buildings stretched across the middle distance. The lurid light, reflected on rolling clouds of smoke, rose and fell as roof and walls toppled over. Fresh fires appeared to be springing into existence at a point to the north-east, and it really looked as if we were witnessing the wholesale destruction by devouring flames of the entire northern side of the city. The night was still, or the damage would have been far greater than it was. The Fire Brigade was overwhelmed, but it did great service. And its work was in some cases done under the fire of the rebels. Two and a half million pounds' worth of property was destroyed during the rising."

On Sunday the rebels who were holding St. Stephen's Green and Jacob's biscuit factory surrendered, and the rebellion was over. Calm settled down upon the distracted city, and the citizens for the first time realized the terrible damage that had been done. Lower Sackville Street, the finest thoroughfare in Dublin, had practically been destroyed. Buildings which once were hotels, restaurants, and fine shops were now smouldering heaps of bricks and twisted girders. Here and there a wall still stood, blackened with flames and smoke, but not a single whole building could be seen along Lower Sackville Street, and for fifty yards on either side of it. The General Post Office was an empty shell.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE AFTERMATH OF REBELLION.

THE rebels had hoped that the rising in Dublin would be the signal for outbreaks all over the country. At various places, mostly in the south and the west of Ireland, local Sinn Feiners appeared in arms, but nowhere were they formidable. The head and front of the whole rebellion was in Dublin, and when it was crushed the local rebellions were easily suppressed.

The rebels believed that they would be backed up by a German landing, but they were relying upon a broken reed. Beyond the Zeppelin raids, which I described in a former chapter, the Germans did nothing to help their Irish allies, except to send a squadron of warships on a wild scurry across the North Sea for the purpose of bombarding Lowestoft and Yarmouth. For half an hour, on the early morning of Tuesday, 25th April, they shelled these towns, killing two men, one woman, and one child, and injuring nine other persons. Considerable damage was also done to dwelling-houses, and with this pitiful record the ships turned and fled for home. Unhappily, they reached their own shores in safety.

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The death-roll of the rebellion was heavy. One hundred and three soldiers had been killed, fifteen policemen, one man of the Royal Navy, and five loyal volunteers; 388 had been wounded, and nine were reported missing. The casualties amongst the rebels and the civil population amounted to 794, including 180 who were killed. When all was over, the work of meting out justice began. Courts-martial were set up, and thirteen of the rebel leaders were shot. Many others were sentenced to death, but were let off with long terms of penal servitude. Joseph

The Capture of the Placards: Munster Fusiliers raiding German Trenches and seizing "News Notices."

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

The German attempt to tamper with the loyalty of our Irish troops at the front was a miserable failure. Our illustration shows the answer which the Munsters returned to invitations to surrender.

Plunkett, one of the men who signed the proclamation, was married in prison to a Miss Gifford on the eve of his execution.

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While the embers of the revolt were being stamped out, the Germans in the trenches opposite the Munster Fusiliers displayed on their parapets placards which read as follows :—

" Irishmen ! Heavy uproar in Ireland : english guns are firing at your wifes and children ! 1st May 1916."

In front of another division these notices appeared :—

" Irishmen ! In Ireland revolution. English guns are firing on your wives and children. The English Military Bill has been refused. Sir Roger Casement is being persecuted. Throw away your arms. We give you a hearty welcome. We are Saxons. If you don't fire, we won't."

How did the loyal fellows in the trenches reply to these invitations ? Immediately they sang Irish airs and " Rule, Britannia ! " to the accompaniment of mouth organs and melodeons ; and that night, when all was still, a party of twenty-five men and two officers of the Munsters crawled towards the German trenches. When they were half-way across the " No Man's Land " an enemy's searchlight revealed them, and machine guns were turned on them. Some of the Irishmen were badly wounded, but all lay still for hours, and then those who were unhurt crept on towards the German lines, cut the wire, charged over the parapets, and hurled bombs into the trenches. The gallant Munsters seized the placards, and bore them back to their own lines in triumph. There were traitors in plenty in the Dublin streets, but there were loyal hearts and true in the trenches. " It's too bad entirely," said a khaki-clad warrior in a mellow Connemara * brogue, " that whilst we are fighting for the honour and glory of ould Ireland, there should be dirty fellows found to come out of their holes with rifles in their hands to play the game of the Germans." He spoke for every man in his division.

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We can, of course, feel nothing but loathing for the madmen who " played the game of the Germans," and at the same time dealt Ireland a foul blow by their crazy rising. Still, we must never forget that thousands of Irish Nationalists were at

* District of Western Ireland, County Galway, famed for its wild and romantic scenery of mountain and lough.

that moment wearing the King's uniform, and fighting bravely for the British Empire. We should do Irishmen a grave wrong were we to tar them all with the same brush. Those who rose in rebellion were comparatively few in number; the bulk of Irishmen either had no sympathy with the outbreak, or were reluctant to take part in an armed revolt. A wise and famous Irish priest said: "Let us remember two things about this Irish rising. The first is that Ireland did not rise at all; the second, that, if she had risen, she would have done so under leaders she knew something about." He begged Englishmen not to punish Ireland for two or three generations to come because of the violence of perverse and foolish men.

Before concluding my account of this painful episode let me dwell for a moment on the splendid services which Irish troops had already rendered in the war. In the retreat from Mons, at the Marne, in the Ypres battles, at Festubert, in the Dardanelles, at Loos, and at Lake Doiran, Irish regiments had covered themselves with glory. Even while recreant Irishmen in Dublin were filling the city with tumult, flame, and slaughter, their loyal countrymen at Hulluch were resisting the poisonous gases, the shells, and the bayonets of the enemy with the utmost courage and fortitude. Let not the shame of plotters and traitors dim the glory of the brave and true.

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As soon as the rising was over a Royal Commission, consisting of Lord Hardinge,* a judge of the High Court, and a distinguished civil servant, was set up "to inquire into the causes of the recent outbreak of rebellion in Ireland." The Commissioners sat in London and in Dublin, and early in July issued a report, in which they said that the main cause of the rebellion was that lawlessness had been allowed to grow up unchecked, and that for years past the Government had refused to put the law into force, when by so doing it would come into conflict with a section of the Irish people. Mr. Birrell,† the Chief Secretary for Ireland, was held to be mainly responsible for the outbreak, and his secretary was blamed because he had not brought home to Mr. Birrell, during his long absences

* Born 1858; formerly Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and Viceroy of India (Nov. 1910–Mar. 1916).

† Augustine Birrell, born 1850; appointed Secretary for Ireland 1907; author of many charming books on literary subjects.

from Ireland, the necessity for taking strong measures to nip the rebellion in the bud. Mr. Birrell and the Lord-Lieutenant at once resigned.

Some weeks before the report was issued, Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister, visited Belfast, Dublin, and Cork, in the hope that good might come out of evil, and that all parties in the country might be brought to agree upon some better method of governing Ireland in the future. On his return to London the Cabinet appointed Mr. Lloyd-George to try to get the rival leaders to come to terms. For a moment it was thought that Nationalists and Ulstermen would agree that the Home Rule Act should come into force, on condition that the six Irish counties of Down, Antrim, Derry, Armagh, Tyrone, and Fermanagh, with the cities of Belfast, Londonderry, and Newry, should not be subject to the Irish Parliament. Difficulties, however, arose, and no further step was taken. The golden opportunity had been missed. The Lord-Lieutenant was re-appointed, but the country was still ruled by martial law. The great and grave problem of the future government of Ireland remained unsolved.

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You will remember that one of the placards which the Germans displayed on their parapets announced that "the English Military Bill has been refused." Before I pass on, I must explain what the Germans meant by these words. In Chapter I. of Volume IV. I told you something about the Derby Scheme, under which a great effort was made to persuade men to offer themselves freely for the army. At first the plan was very successful, and before the end of December 1915 nearly three million men had "attested"—that is, had declared themselves ready to serve when their classes should be called up. Soon, however, it was clear that the army was not getting all the men that it needed. Very large numbers of men had been "starred" —that is, had been freed from enlistment, because it was supposed that they were necessary for carrying on the trade of the country. Many other men would willingly have served; but they felt that their wives and children would suffer if they had to live on the small allowance granted to the families of those who joined the army. Whole classes of men, such as farmers and miners, were freed from enlistment, and there were many others who claimed to go free because they had a conscientious objec-

A Barricade in the Streets of Dublin. [*By permission of The Record Press.*

You will notice that our men have erected a barrier consisting of furniture from the adjoining houses and of iron boilers. The chief danger our troops had to face was the sniping from the windows and roofs of houses in which the Sinn Feiners had taken refuge.

tion to fighting. No doubt many of these "conscientious objectors" really believed in their hearts that service in the army was contrary to the law of God, but there were many others who put forward this plea in order to escape doing their duty to their country. The consequence was that there was a shortage of men. On 21st December the Prime Minister said that another million men must be raised—the fourth million since August 5, 1914.

The married men who had "attested" now began to give trouble. Many of them had gone to the recruiting office believing that they were not to be called up until all the unmarried men were in the ranks. They pointed out that there were still more than 650,000 unstarred single men who had not answered the call. The only real way out of the difficulty was to make every man of military age liable for service, and to call up all who were eligible, whether married or unmarried, attested or unattested, and pick and choose from them those who were to serve in the army.

The Government, however, was very unwilling to grasp the nettle, and it now proposed a scheme of partial compulsion. On January 24, 1916, an Act was passed compelling all unmarried men or widowers without children dependent on them, between the ages of eighteen and forty-one, to serve in the army. This Act, you see, only compelled the unmarried men to do their duty.

Before long it was clear that even this Act, which came into force on 10th February, was not sufficient. The married men still contended that they ought not to be called up until all the unmarried men were in arms. So grave was the discontent that the Government was obliged to try another method of solving the difficulty. It brought in a Bill which tried to get the men without general compulsion, and in secret sessions of the House of Commons told the members exactly what numbers the chiefs of the army required. The country was by this time tired of makeshifts, and was quite ready for general compulsory service.

When the Government's Bill was introduced in the House of Commons on 22nd April, it was promptly rejected. A few days later the Dublin rebellion was in full blast, and it was clear that additional soldiers would now be necessary, not only to fight the Germans, but to prevent

such risings in future. The Government now threw aside the last remnants of doubt, and on 3rd May the Prime Minister brought in a Bill which declared that from that date every male British subject whose regular abode was in Great Britain, and who was between the ages of eighteen and forty-one, was to be considered duly enlisted in the army for the term of the war. The Bill was carried by a majority of 250 to 35, and was signed by the King on 25th May. His Majesty sent a message to his people on that day, thanking them for their patriotism and self-sacrifice. He pointed out that some five million men had enlisted without legal compulsion, and that no such free rally of a great nation had ever before been recorded in history.

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Thus Britain parted with the system which had been her boast and pride for hundreds of years, and under which she has risen to a lofty pinnacle of might and majesty. Compulsory service was now the law of the land ; the whole manhood of the nation was now available for military service, and Great Britain had come into line with the nations of the Continent. Of all the changes due to the war, this was probably the greatest, and it is certain that nothing but the gravest and most urgent necessity would have brought it about. There are many who blame the Government for not establishing compulsion sooner, and some accuse the Cabinet of lacking courage, and of following rather than leading the mind of the country. But we must remember that so vast and far-reaching a change in our national life could only be safely carried into effect when the people were fully prepared for it. Had a large section of the people resisted, disaster might have followed. As it was, the course of events converted the bulk of the nation to the necessity for compulsion, and they agreed to the change when they saw clearly that there was no other way.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE GREAT SEA FIGHT OFF JUTLAND.—I.

ON that hot August afternoon of 1914 when our fleets silently disappeared to their secret war stations, every British sailor hoped and believed that ere long he would play his part in a North Sea Trafalgar. Weeks lengthened into months, and the hope was not fulfilled. Nevertheless it was this hope which buoyed up our sailors during the wearisome and monotonous work of watching and waiting, and battling with the bitter winds and stormy waves of northern seas.

There was no special ground for the bluejackets' hope that the enemy would come out and fight. The German sea lords had made no secret of the fact that they meant to avoid a big battle until they could meet our fleets on equal or superior terms. They cherished the vain hope that by means of their submarines they would be able to reduce our navy to their own level. They sank many of our vessels by submarine attack; but all the time the clang of hammers never ceased in our shipbuilding yards, and for every cruiser or patrol boat that was sent to the bottom, another or others were launched. Despite its losses, the British navy was stronger in May 1916 than it had been when war broke out.

Though our sailors knew all this, they still believed that when the war on land began to go against Germany the High Seas Fleet would come out and challenge the British navy. They argued that the Huns would strive to retrieve their losses on land by a victory at sea. In May it seemed to them that the hour had arrived when Germany would be obliged to make this gambler's throw. The long and costly struggle at Verdun had failed; the Russian armies, millions strong and muni-

tioned anew, were beginning to advance. Germany's reserves of men were failing, and unless success came soon it could not come at all. Our seamen were right: the German war lords needed a success badly, and, as events proved, they meant to cheer the hearts of their people with the glad news of victory, whether they won it or not. On May 31, 1916, the German High Seas Fleet came out of its harbours, and on that day the greatest sea fight in all the history of the world up to that time took place.

Before I describe the battle, let me remind you that the British navy had from the first won the command of the seas. For twenty-one months, thanks to our navy, we had the full use of the ocean highways, while the enemy had scarcely a ship afloat on the wide waters of the world. It was the freedom of the seas which enabled us, while holding out against the enemy's fierce attacks, to supply ourselves with the men, guns, and munitions which we lacked, and put ourselves in a position to meet the foe on equal and more than equal terms.

Nor was the benefit of this command of the seas ours alone. Had we not been able to traverse all the sea highways at will, France would have been without coal for her factories, machines for her shell shops, and beef for her troops. Unless the ocean tracks to Vladivostok and Archangel had been kept open, Russia could have obtained no rifles, guns, or shells from America, Japan, or Great Britain. If the sea routes to Genoa and Leghorn had been closed, Italy would have lacked those supplies which enabled her, as you will read later, to resist and finally defeat the Austrians amidst the Alpine snows of her rugged frontier.

"But for the grain and meat ships, but for the raw materials and manufactures of America, Great Britain would be starved and powerless, her splendid regiments unarmed, her factories unproductive. Unless our transports were free to cross the Channel, the vast new army—so much of which has come from our overseas Colonies—could not be maintained for a single day. Everything then turned on Great Britain's command of the sea, and that command turned on the issue of the Battle of Jutland."

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In all the naval engagements that had so far taken place the big battleships of friend and foe had played no part. Cruisers alone fought the Battle of Heligoland Bight, wrought the destruction of Cradock's squadron off Coronel, won the

Battle of the Falkland Islands and the running fight on the Dogger Bank. Our battle cruisers, which you will remember form the first line of British sea strength, bore the brunt of the fray in all these engagements. It was their business to sweep the North Sea from time to time in the hope of catching the enemy and bringing him to battle. The battle cruisers were the advance guard of the Grand Fleet, the hounds that must close with the quarry and hold it till the hunters appeared on the scene.

You can easily understand that this work of searching for the enemy was very anxious and very trying. The commander of the squadron had to be on the watch night and day, for his chance might come at any moment. He had to take grave risks, for the enemy might suddenly oppose him in full strength, and overwhelm him before the big battleships could come to his assistance. And while he took these risks he had to be very wary lest he might lose his ships, and thus bring down our sea strength for a time to the level of the enemy. You must always remember that a ship is much more difficult to replace than a regiment. Fresh men can be called up to take the places of those who have fallen, and soldiers can be trained in six months; but it takes six years to make a junior naval officer, a cruiser takes two years to build, and a battleship three.

A rash act on the part of a British admiral might so weaken our sea forces as to bring about the very condition of things that the enemy hoped for. On the other hand, without boldness, and perhaps even rashness, we could not get to grips with foes who were determined to avoid fighting until they could do so on even terms. We shall soon see that in the Battle of Jutland Sir David Beatty, the commander of our Battle Cruiser Squadron, was called upon to make a quick and very grave decision. He had to decide whether, with one section of the British fleet, he would attack the whole German High Seas Fleet, or whether he would decline the fight and run for safety. Knowing the man as you do, I need not tell you what his decision was. He chose to fight, and to hang on grimly until Sir John Jellicoe's battleships appeared, when he knew that the issue of the battle would be no longer in doubt. By his superb boldness he played, perhaps, the largest part in the issue of the day.

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On the afternoon of Tuesday, May 30, 1916, the British Grand Fleet left its northern bases in order to make a sweep of the North Sea. It was in two sections. To the north was Sir John Jellicoe's division of four battle squadrons, one battle cruiser squadron, three other cruiser squadrons, and three destroyer flotillas.* South of Jellicoe's division was the Battle Cruiser Fleet of two squadrons, under Sir David Beatty, a battleship squadron under Rear-Admiral Evan-Thomas, three light cruiser squadrons, and four destroyer flotillas. You will notice that each of the sections contained both battle cruisers and battleships, but that Sir John Jellicoe's division was far stronger in battleships than Sir David Beatty's.

Let us look for a moment at the force under Sir David Beatty. Its ten biggest ships were six battle cruisers and four battleships of the latest and fastest type. Its leader was the youngest British naval officer who ever wore an admiral's stripes; but young as he was, he had in two battles shown such splendid courage, skill, and resource that he was the idol of every man under his command. The admirals who served with him—Evan-Thomas, Pakenham, and Brock—were all young, brilliant, and gallant; and his captains were men of like kidney, some of whom—such as Napier, Goodenough, and Sinclair—had already given proof of fine seamanship and daring bravery. Then, too, there were the commanders of the destroyers, men of the greatest skill and enterprise, who, before the battle was over, were to show such dashing and fiery courage as has never been known even in the glorious annals of the British navy. Every man, from admiral to boy, breathed the spirit of victory.

Now let us turn to Sir John Jellicoe's division, which was about an hour and a half's steaming to the northward. It was a fleet the like of which had never before been seen in battle. In the strength of its massive walls, in the power of its engines, the might of its guns, and the skill of those who navigated it and manned its weapons, it never had an equal. Its commander was the man who since the war began had been the brain of the whole navy. He was faced with the terrible menace of mines and submarines and airships—such dangers as older admirals never dreamed of; but with rare forethought and deep cunning he had devised methods of dealing with them

* See map, p. 255.

The Great Naval Battle off Jutland: Admiral Hood's Squadron going into Action.

(*From the picture by S. Begg. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

In the foreground and centre of the drawing are seen the three leading British battle cruisers with attendant destroyers advancing to meet the enemy. Leading the British line is *Invincible;* the second battle cruiser is *Inflexible;* the third, *Indomitable.* On the left is seen the line of the German ships, pale gray in colour. (See page 264.)

Cool, tireless, calm, never flurried and never surprised, he was the very embodiment of the scientific seaman of the modern school.

On the morning of the last day of May the German High Seas Fleet also put to sea, and sailed north for a hundred miles or so from the coast of Jutland. It, too, was in two divisions. First went Admiral von Hipper's five battle cruisers, with attendant cruisers and destroyers, and following them came the Battle Fleet, consisting of most of the big ships in the German navy, under command of Admiral von Scheer. It is probable that the whole fleet consisted of nineteen or twenty modern battleships, five cruisers, some older battleships, about twenty light cruisers, and a large force of destroyers and submarines. Almost the whole fighting strength of Germany was at sea.

We do not know why von Scheer brought his ships out that day. Perhaps he had learned that the British fleet was at sea, and he hoped to engage and destroy a portion of it before the remainder could come to its aid. He may have been about to make a raid on the British coast, or he may have been escorting cruisers which were to make a dash for the open sea in order to prey upon our merchant vessels. It is more likely that the German people had begun to ask what was the good of a fleet that only lay in its harbours, and could do nothing more than dash out into the North Sea and run home again as soon as the enemy appeared. The German war lords very probably ordered the fleet out to allay the rising discontent amongst the public at home.

All over the North Sea during the last week of May lay a light summer haze. On Wednesday, the 31st, loose gray clouds began to overspread the sky. About midday Sir David Beatty, having finished his sweep to the south, turned northward to rejoin Sir John Jellicoe. The sea was as calm as a mill pond. In front of the battle cruisers were the light cruisers and destroyers, forming a screen extending from east to west. They were searching the North Sea over a wide front, looking for the enemy. Suddenly, at 2.20, *Galatea*, the flagship of the 1st Light Cruiser Squadron, which was on the extreme right wing, sighted to the eastward some light craft of the enemy.*

At once two squadrons of our light cruisers made a dash for

* See diagram on p. 256.

them, and Sir David Beatty turned his battle cruisers round towards the east, so as to cut off the enemy ships from their bases. A little later a seaplane was sent up from the *Engadine*,

Map to illustrate the Scene of the Battle of Jutland.

formerly the Cunard Liner *Campania*, and in a very few minutes the aviator, from a height of 900 feet, reported that behind the light craft of the enemy there were five German battle cruisers. The enemy had been discovered in strength. Promptly at 3.30

Sir David formed his battle cruisers—*Lion*, *Tiger*, *Queen Mary*, *Princess Royal*, *Indefatigable*, and *New Zealand*—into line of battle. The battleships *Barham*, *Valiant*, *Malaya*, and *Warspite* also formed line some five miles behind him. You must not suppose that the ships lay exactly in a line one behind the other. Sir David was now driving straight into the wind, and had the vessels been exactly in line, the smoke from the funnels and guns would have obscured the view of all but the leading ship of each line. The vessels were therefore arranged in

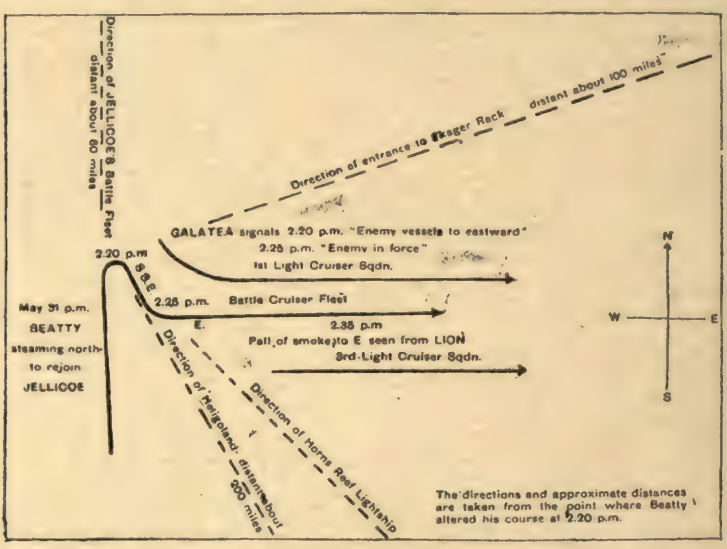

Diagram to illustrate the Movements of Sir David Beatty's Fleet when the German Fleet was sighted.

steps, as it were, so that the smoke would blow away to the southward of them.

The British battle cruisers tore on towards the enemy ships, which were soon seen to be racing back to join the main German fleet, now coming up rapidly from the south. At 3.48, when the fleets were about eleven miles apart, the guns began to thunder. Gradually Beatty's ships gained on the enemy, and the range was reduced to eight miles. Twenty minutes later the *Barham* and her three consorts joined in the fray. They were firing their 15-inch guns at a range of 12½ miles, and probably at that distance did not do much damage.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE GREAT SEA FIGHT OFF JUTLAND.—II.

SIR DAVID BEATTY had now to make that most important decision to which I have already referred. So far the odds were in his favour: he had six battle cruisers and four battleships against von Hipper's five battle cruisers; but he now knew that in a very short time the main German fleet would come up, and he would be enormously outnumbered. Should he fight or should he fly? There would be no disgrace in refusing to fight more than twenty big vessels with his ten. No one would be likely to blame him if he turned and ran for safety towards the main British fleet, just as the Germans were doing. But he knew that if he did so there would be no battle, and he longed with every fibre of his nature to strike a blow at the enemy, who had given him the slip in two former battles. Never for a moment was there any doubt in his mind as to what he ought to do. He refused to play for safety. He determined to take on the whole German fleet, and hold it fast until Sir John Jellicoe could come up. So, full steam ahead was the order. Could Nelson have revisited the glimpses of the moon on that day, he would have gloried in Sir David's heroic decision.

At 3.48 the first stage of the battle began. About four o'clock enemy submarines were sighted on the right and left of the British line; but a dashing attack by the destroyers drove them off. A quarter of an hour later, eleven destroyers were ordered to rush towards the German battle cruisers and try to torpedo them. German destroyers came out to defend their big ships, and a fierce engagement followed at close quarters, with the result that two German destroyers were sunk and the rest were driven back. Nevertheless, the Germans had prevented our destroyers from discharging their torpedoes.

The fight had delayed them, and had caused most of them to drop astern, and therefore to be in the wrong position to fire their torpedoes. If a torpedo is to be discharged with the best chance of success, it must be fired ahead of the target ship, so as to meet it. This could not now be done from our light craft, most of which had gone astern. Some of them, however, had kept the right position, and were able to fire their torpedoes, one of which found its billet in the rear ship of the enemy's line.

Meanwhile the fighting between the opposing battle cruisers was very fierce and resolute. At the beginning of the battle the gunnery of the enemy was very good indeed, and it was only later, when the fight was going against them, that their shooting became wild. By half-past four Sir David's six cruisers had been reduced to four. A lucky shot had hit the *Indefatigable* in a dangerous spot, and had blown her up. The *Queen Mary*, perhaps the best gunnery ship in the fleet, had also been struck by a chance shell, and had suffered the same fate. She did not, however, go down before her superb marksmanship had taken heavy toll of the enemy. By this time the haze had settled down upon the waters, and the British gunners could only see their targets in blurred outline. The sea all around was dotted with submarines, but by rare good luck our vessels passed through them without loss.

Sir David, with only four battle cruisers, now found himself faced by the whole German fleet. What was he to do? It would mean his utter destruction if he attempted to fight them all, even with the help of Evan-Thomas's battleships, which were now coming up at full speed. But though he could not tackle this great force, he could entice it towards Sir John Jellicoe's ships, which were racing southwards with the stokers working like inspired giants down below. He therefore turned his squadron to the right about, and headed straight for the point towards which he knew that Jellicoe's Battle Fleet was advancing. Ten minutes later Admiral Evan-Thomas followed suit, and formed up in line behind the battle cruisers. For a good hour and a quarter these eight vessels kept up a running fight with the whole German fleet. The work of the British engineers during this stage of the battle was splendid. The *New Zealand*, for example, broke all her records, and managed to keep up with her faster consorts.

Why, you will ask, did von Scheer, the German Commander-

Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty, commanding the First Battle-Cruiser Squadron, in Action, May 31, 1916.

in-Chief, follow Beatty, and thus allow himself to be drawn into a trap? He had already sunk two British battle cruisers, and with this success he might have been content. The fact is, that though he had Zeppelins scouting for him, the haze prevented them from seeing Jellicoe's fleet. Von Scheer actually did not know that Jellicoe was out and that he was drawing nearer and nearer every moment. He thought that Beatty was cruising on his own account, and that he had no supports in the offing. It appeared to him that Beatty was running away, and that he had a good chance of destroying him altogether. We can imagine the exultation on board the German ships when they saw, as they fondly supposed, that the gods had delivered the whole of Beatty's fleet into their hands.

Beatty, of course, knew better. He knew that Jellicoe was only fifty or sixty miles away, and that if he could coax the Germans within range of the oncoming fleet the issue of the day would not be in doubt. So with his guns roaring he sped towards Jellicoe. Though we had lost two ships, you must not suppose that the enemy had not suffered. Before von Hipper joined von Scheer, one of his ships was seen to be on fire, and another had been torpedoed. It was, however, during the running fight to the north that the enemy came in for severe punishment. To appreciate properly the fine shooting of the British fleet, you must understand that while our vessels stood out sharp and clear against the western horizon, the enemy was shrouded in fog, and could only be seen in dim outline now and then. A German cruiser—perhaps the *Lutzow*—was driven out of the line, broken and battered, and other enemy ships also showed signs of distress. The smaller craft, too, were busy, and a destroyer got home a torpedo on the sixth ship of the enemy line.

Beatty had, however, one great advantage over the enemy. His ships were faster than those of the Germans, and so he was able not only to keep steadily ahead of them, but to begin a gradual curve to the eastward. Why did he do this? Look at the diagram on the next page, and you will understand. Jellicoe's fleet, you will observe, was steaming to the south-east, while the German fleet was going north-west. Had the two fleets kept on these courses they would not have met. Beatty, as you know, wished to shepherd the Germans right into the arms of Jellicoe. He therefore began a swerve to-

wards the east, and by doing so forced von Scheer to swerve eastward too, and make for the very point towards which Jellicoe's fleet was rapidly advancing. The Germans imagined that they were driving Beatty before them ; as a matter of fact, he was heading them towards the main British fleet. It was a fine manœuvre, and another proof of the young admiral's splendid seamanship.

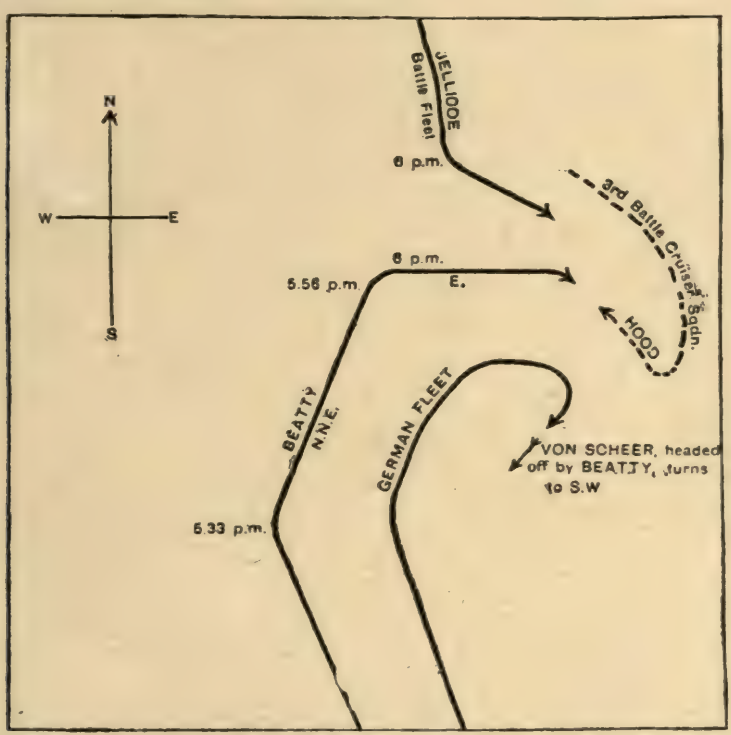

Diagram to illustrate Beatty's swerving Manœuvre to the East, in order to shepherd the German Fleet into the arms of Jellicoe.

At this point the first stage of the battle may be said to have ended. Let me sum up in a few words what had happened. Shortly after 2 p.m. on Wednesday Admiral Beatty's fleet of six battle cruisers and four battleships came in contact with Admiral von Hipper's battle-cruiser squadron. They drove von Hipper back on the main German fleet, which consisted of about twenty battleships, with a strong force of lighter craft. During this phase of the fight we lost the *Indefatigable* and

Queen Mary. When, at 4.38, Beatty found himself up against the whole German High Seas Fleet and hopelessly outnumbered, he changed his course from south to north, and ran towards Sir John Jellicoe's fleet; but while doing so was able to inflict considerable loss on the enemy, and force him to edge off to the eastward, where he would, if he continued on that course, fall into the hands of the main British fleet. At 5.50 Sir John Jellicoe's light cruisers were sighted, and six minutes later the vanguard of the Grand Fleet, which had been steering for two hours to the thunder of the guns, could be seen only five miles away. Then Beatty, leading the line, steered *Lion* directly east at full speed, crossing, as it were, the T of the German line. His object was to force the Germans to follow his movements, to concentrate a fire upon the head of their line, and at the same time to get, if possible, clear away to the east, so as to leave the road open for the Grand Fleet to come into action and finish the business of the enemy.

Beatty had done a great work, and had greatly added to his laurels. With a vastly inferior force he had not only kept the enemy engaged until the main British fleet could come up, but he had lured him into a position which seemed to threaten his total destruction.

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We must now turn to Sir John Jellicoe's Battle Fleet and follow its fortunes. When the wireless on the Commander-in-Chief's flagship cracked and spluttered with the news that Beatty was in contact with the enemy, Jellicoe was some fifty or sixty miles to the northward, steering south-east. You may imagine the delight with which all ranks, from boy to admiral, received the glad tidings. The long-looked-for day had come at last. The Trafalgar so long expected was about to begin. Down in the stokeholes men naked to the waist laboured as they had never done before, and all speed records were broken. In his dispatch Sir John Jellicoe pays a high tribute to the stokers and engineers. It must never be forgotten, he tells us, that bringing the fleet into action is the work of the engine-room department, and that during the battle the officers and men of that department have to perform their most important duties without knowing how the fight is going. Their discipline and endurance are taxed to the utmost in these conditions, and during the Battle of Jutland their work was beyond all praise.

Serving the Guns to the Last.

(*From the drawing by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.*)

A typical scene during the great battle. Though many of our men were killed or wounded, and shells were falling all around, the survivors stuck to their guns and continued to fire on the enemy without a thought of themselves.

It was no easy work to bring the Grand Fleet to join Beatty's squadrons at the proper moment, and at the point which had been previously fixed upon. There are no signposts at sea, and very careful calculation has to be made if ships are to meet at a precise spot in the wide ocean. Moreover, when the junction was made, the hazy weather made it difficult to distinguish between the enemy ships and the British ships.

The 3rd Battle Cruiser Squadron, under Rear-Admiral Hood, led the Battle Fleet. At 5.30 Hood saw flashes of fire, and heard the sound of guns to the south-west. At once he sent off *Chester* as a scout, and this ship soon found herself attacked by three or four of the enemy's light cruisers. For twenty minutes *Chester* maintained the unequal combat. She was hit again and again, and many of her men were killed or wounded; but she was splendidly handled, and as her engines had not suffered, she was able to rejoin her squadron. It was during this terrible time that "First-Class Boy John Travers Cornwell," a lad of sixteen and a half, played a hero's part and met a hero's death. I shall tell you his undying story on a later page.

At 6.20 Admiral Hood led his squadron into action in a manner worthy of the great seamen from whom he was descended. He came of a long line of sailors, two of whom did magnificent work for their country during the great war with France. One of his ancestors, Lord Hood, covered himself with glory in 1788, when the French fleet was utterly destroyed off Dominica in the West Indies; and another, Sir Samuel Hood, Lord Hood's cousin, was almost equally distinguished. The name Hood is one to conjure with in the British navy, and a Hood just as intrepid and skilful as his forbears now bore down upon the enemy.

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For a moment let us return to Sir David Beatty and see how he was faring. When he began to cross the T of the German line, the enemy perceived his movements, and promptly tried to upset them by sending a light cruiser to make a torpedo attack on his ships from ahead.

"Then followed a most gallant and picturesque incident. *Onslow*, a large destroyer, went full tilt for the enemy cruiser, and fought her at the short range of from 4,000 to 2,000 yards, driving her off. Having disposed of this enemy, she then went straight for the head of the enemy's

line to attack with torpedoes; but before more than one of her four could be fired, she was disabled by a heavy shell.

"The captain, thinking that all his torpedoes were fired, and being, of course, unable to engage 12-inch guns with 4-inch guns, thought only of saving his ship. He was then told that there were still three torpedoes in the tubes. He no longer had the speed necessary for tackling the battle cruisers, but seeing the light cruiser which he had driven off within range, he went for her and sank her with his three torpedoes. But he was still hopelessly crippled, and he had to stop. So in the midst of the track of battle he lay for an hour, until he in turn was rescued by another destroyer, wounded almost as badly as he was, but not altogether incapable of movement. Admiral Beatty tells us, as if it were nothing particular, that this destroyer, the *Defender*, had been struck in one of her boilers by a 12-inch shell. It seems a miracle that this fragile craft, built of steel less than a quarter of an inch thick, and with the lightest of scantlings and beams, was not entirely shattered and destroyed by so formidable a missile. But she could still steam 10 knots an hour, and she took *Onslow* in tow, and both were saved." *

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Hood, with *Invincible*, *Inflexible*, and *Indomitable*, now swung gallantly into line ahead of Beatty, and at once opened a very hot and accurate fire on the leading German ships. *Invincible*, you will remember, was now going into action for the third time. She had fought gallantly in the Battle of Heligoland Bight, and had played a large part in the destruction of von Spee's squadron off the Falkland Islands. She was now about to fight her last fight, and leave her bones at the bottom of the North Sea. A survivor thus describes the fight :—

"Getting within about 12,000 yards of the enemy ships, *Invincible* joined the fray by opening fire upon some of the German light cruisers. Our marksmanship was splendid, and we evidently damaged the enemy considerably, although, owing to the thick weather, I could not see exactly what effect our shells had upon the vessels as they hit them.

"*Invincible* kept pushing in closer, until at last she got into touch with some enemy cruisers, and opened fire upon them at about 9,600 yards range. Of course, all the time we were going towards the enemy, and the range was quickly decreasing, until it got very short. Picking out the leading German battle cruiser, the name of which I do not know, *Invincible* turned her guns upon it. The ship was a very large one, apparently the largest of the lot, and she suffered greatly at our hands.

"Here I might say that our light cruisers and the enemy light cruisers were all the while fighting between the *Invincible* and the ship she was engaged with. The larger vessels fought over the heads of the smaller ones. That will give you some idea of what kind of a mix-up it was."

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* Quoted from Mr. A. H. Pollen's account of the battle in *The Weekly Dispatch*.

The Germans were shooting well, but *Invincible* was shooting better. Several times during the action Admiral Hood complimented Commander Dannreuther, his gunnery officer, on the fine marksmanship that was displayed. Several times she hit the target ship, and finally set her on fire. The last message which *Invincible's* gunners received from the admiral was, "You are doing splendid firing!"

Several German cruisers now concentrated their guns on *Invincible*, and a few minutes after the admiral's message had been received a terrible explosion occurred in her centre. The force of the explosion was so great that it seemed to lift the middle of the ship right out, and before the men who had been flung into the water had time to realize their condition the vessel was sinking. An eye-witness says: "I saw her go. There came just one great burst of flame and smoke. When this cleared away, all that I could discern of her were her bow and stern sticking up out of the water. A few minutes later, when we passed the spot, there was nothing left of the ship." She went down with nearly all her crew of seven hundred. Only six men were picked up; they had saved their lives by clinging to floating wreckage. *Invincible* had only been in action for a quarter of an hour, but in that short time she had done deadly work. The leading ship of the Germans had been shattered and driven out of the line; the head of the German fleet had, as Sir David Beatty says, "been crumpled up."

Four minutes before Hood went into action, *Defence* and *Warrior* were seen passing down between the British and German battle fleets under a very heavy fire. A survivor of *Warrior* tells us that his ship went straight at the enemy, following the lead of *Defence*. Four of the enemy's ships concentrated their fire on these two vessels. *Defence*, after fighting for eight minutes against heavy odds, was struck aft, and an explosion followed. Nevertheless she still pressed on towards the enemy, firing her foremost guns. Then she was hit forward, and a second and greater explosion occurred. Dense clouds of smoke arose, and in the midst of them *Defence* disappeared. She had fought gallantly to the last.

Warrior was now suffering heavy punishment. Her starboard engine-room was wrecked, and her hydraulic pumps were disabled, so that thenceforward the guns had to be worked by

hand. She began to slew round, and with her port battery sank a German light cruiser, which she had previously set on fire. Five German battleships now blazed away at her, and shell after shell burst on board. One of them plunged into the dynamo room and wrecked it, so that all lights were put out, and all the telephones were rendered useless. The survivor already quoted says :—

"This meant semi-darkness in the shell-room passages and other places, through which men were obliged to grope their way as best they could by the aid of temporary lights. And, of course, broken communications prevented orders from being passed in the usual quick way.

"One shell which hit the *Warrior* on the port side tore its way through three cabins and then went down into the engineers' workshop, where it smashed part of the supports of my turret. Luckily this shell did not explode; if it had done so I should not have been here. A large projectile which pitched about eight feet from the fore part of my turret smashed its way through the upper deck; then another struck the deck about seven feet behind the turret and did a lot of damage. A little aft of us were the boat hoists, and through these an 11-inch shell cut completely. We were indeed 'in it,' and the strangest experience I had was when a large shell burst in the water about twenty feet from the muzzle of my gun and knocked me backwards by the force of its explosion. I was dazed for a few seconds, but recovered, and felt quite relieved to be 'all there.'"

Soon *Warrior* was in a desperate condition. A few minutes more, and she must have met the fate of *Defence*. Relief, however, was on the way. Admiral Evan-Thomas's four battleships, with their 15-inch guns, were now hard at work, and one of them, *Warspite*, steamed up at full speed and thrust herself in between *Warrior* and the German battleships that were making havoc of her. The enemy ships were forced to leave *Warrior* alone, and to turn their fire upon *Warspite*. Unfortunately, *Warspite's* steering gear became jammed; she was out of control, but she steamed round and round, shielding *Warrior*.

"Several ships concentrated their salvos on her; some say six, others eight. For some time, at any rate, *Warspite* was invisible, hidden by the vast fountains which the German shells sent into the air as they struck the water all round her. All who saw it thought it impossible that she could survive. Suddenly from the midst of the turmoil she emerged, apparently unscathed, and to the delighted astonishment of her friends opened fire with all her guns. It was a great moment."

Amidst all this intense bombardment *Warspite* suffered only slightly, though the Germans afterwards claimed that they had

sunk her. One gun turret was hit, but her engines were quite uninjured.

Under shelter of *Warspite's* wing, *Warrior* slowly crept out of action by means of her port engine, the only one which would work. Soon after she got out of range this engine gave out, and she lay on the water as helpless as a log. By this time, however, the squadrons of the Grand Fleet had come up, and the battle had moved southward.

Warrior was leaking badly, and it was clear that she would soon sink. The seaplane carrier *Engadine* now steamed up and took the disabled vessel in tow. All night long her crew strove hard to save their ship ; but when morning dawned it was plain that their task was hopeless. Her wounded men were transferred to *Engadine*, and the remainder of the crew followed. When *Engadine* steamed past the sinking vessel, *Warrior's* crew gave her three parting cheers. They did not see her go down, but they saw her waterlogged and awash astern.

It was during this period that the *Black Prince* received damage which led later to her destruction.

At 6.50 the position was roughly as follows :—Beatty had turned the German van, and was steering south-east, gradually moving towards the south. Sir John Jellicoe had deployed his ships, and was following Sir David's course in a single line. The two sections of the British fleet were now united ; they were one fighting unit. The German line was headed off on the east, and Beatty and Jellicoe were working their way between the enemy and his home ports. " The grandest sight I have ever seen," said an eye-witness, " was the sight of our battle line—miles of it fading into the mist—taking up their positions like clockwork, and then belching forth great sheets of fire and clouds of smoke." The enemy was now greatly outnumbered, and it looked as though the destruction of the German fleet was only a matter of hours.

Then came misfortune. The haze which had been hanging over the waters all day now deepened into one of those thick fogs so common in the North Sea. So dense was it that it veiled the enemy's movements completely, and frequently hid his ships altogether. This not only made gunnery very difficult, but prevented the British from keeping proper contact with the enemy. The failing light, however, was in our favour. From time to time the German ships were seen stand-

"Warspite" coming to the Rescue of "Warrior."

(*From the drawing by Arthur J. W. Burgess. By permission of The Sphere.*)

About 6.30 p.m. *Warspite* came up to the rescue of the sinking *Warrior*. Immediately she smashed up one of the leading German battleships. First she cleared away the enemy's foremost mast and then sent two of her turrets flying out of position. Finally she set the German on fire. The enemy ship thus handled is seen in the foreground.

ing out clear against the sunset. When this occurred, the British gunners took full advantage of the opportunity. How well they worked their guns may be gathered from the following passage in an officer's letter home: "One of our 12-inch-gun ships put her salvos into a German ship so accurately that the enemy vessel heeled right over under the heavy blows. Of course the German went out of action. If the 12-inch gun could do this, how much more destructive must have been the well-directed fire from 15-inch and 13.5-inch guns. . . . It was a gunners' battle. Our gunnery is better at the points than that of the enemy. . . ."

Under cover of the thick weather von Scheer turned his fleet as rapidly as he could, and sped southward for safety and home, with the British hard after him. For the British the situation was heart-breaking. The long-looked-for chance had come; the German fleet was at our mercy, and yet the full fruits of victory were snatched out of our hands by the thick weather. But though the enemy escaped, he did not escape unscathed. At 7.14, when the sun was hidden behind the western clouds, Beatty sighted two battle cruisers and two battleships of the enemy, and engaged them vigorously. Soon they began to show signs of great distress. One of them was on fire, and another was dropping astern. To hide these ships from Beatty's gunners, the German destroyers raised a heavy pall of smoke, under cover of which they got away.

About eight o'clock the 1st and 3rd Light Cruiser Squadrons were ordered to sweep westward, in order to discover where the head of the enemy's line was, and twenty minutes later Beatty altered course in the same direction. He soon sighted three battle cruisers or battleships, and engaged them at 10,000 yards range. *Lion* got her shells home time after time on the leading ship, which fell out of line, burning furiously and listing heavily to port. *Princess Royal* set fire to another battleship, and forced a third to leave the line. She also was in flames, and heeling over. Then the mist came down again, and the enemy could no longer be seen.

At 8.40 all Sir David Beatty's battle cruisers felt a heavy shock, which sent a quiver through them. At first it was thought that the ships must have been torpedoed, or that they had run upon mines or had fouled sunken wreckage. At once the hulls of the vessels were examined; but as they showed no

damage, it was supposed that the shock had been caused by the blowing up of a big enemy vessel somewhere in the mist to the westward.

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Meanwhile, what was Sir John Jellicoe's fleet doing? It had fired its first shots at 6.17, when the 1st Battle Squadron came into action, and had administered severe punishment to

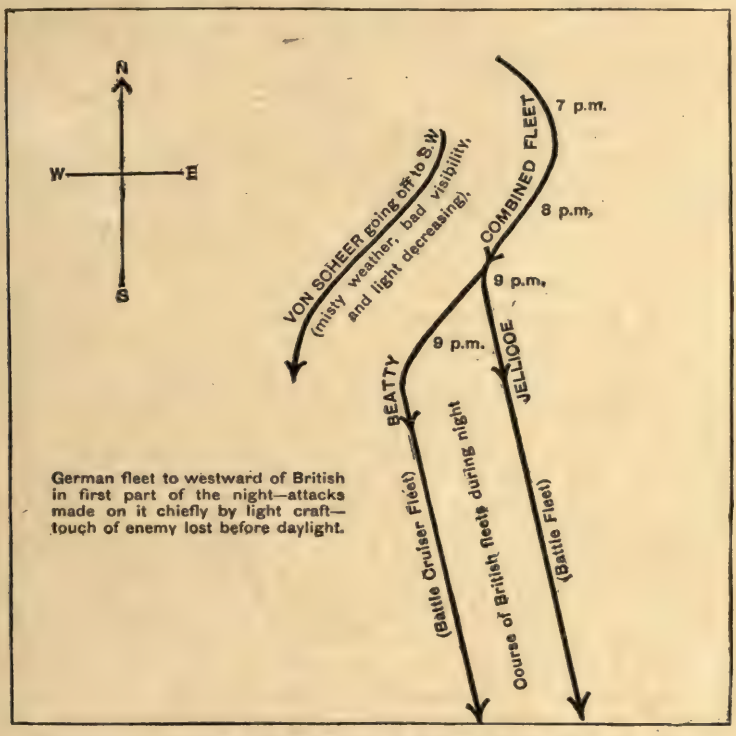

Diagram to illustrate Movements of British Fleet after the Union of Beatty and Jellicoe at 9 p.m.

the enemy. The *Marlborough* was soon prominent. She fired seven salvos at a battleship; then she engaged a cruiser, and afterwards another battleship. A few minutes before seven she was hit by a torpedo, and listed considerably to starboard; but by 7.12 she was at it again, and soon had fired fourteen rapid salvos at another battleship, and had forced it to leave the line. Sir John Jellicoe tells us that the manner in which this ship kept up a rapid fire, despite the fact that she had been

disabled by a torpedo, set a very fine example to the whole squadron.

Iron Duke, with Sir John Jellicoe on board, opened fire at 6.30 on a battleship 12,000 yards away. Very quickly this enemy ship was "straddled" * by shrapnel fire, and at the second salvo her shells got home. *Iron Duke* fired with great rapidity, and soon the target ship, unable to stand it any longer, turned away. The light cruisers were also busy with torpedoes. During this stage of the fight they sank a German battleship and four destroyers.

By nine o'clock the enemy had completely disappeared, and darkness was rapidly setting in. All the British main forces had by this time encircled the German fleet, and were between it and Heligoland. Nothing but the fog and the coming of night had saved the enemy from complete destruction. Sir John Jellicoe dared not close in on von Scheer's ships during the hours of darkness. The sea was swarming with submarines and torpedo craft, and he would have run frightful risks had he attempted to continue the fight with his big ships during the night. He therefore arranged his fleet so that it would be in a most favourable position for continuing the battle next day.

Meanwhile he did not intend to leave the Germans at peace. The light craft were ordered to make a night attack. The object of this attack was to demoralize the enemy, and force him to disclose his whereabouts, so that as soon as daylight returned he could be picked up and finished off. Having once got firm hold of the enemy, Sir John did not mean to let him go again until he had finished his job.

* Some of their shots fell over the enemy ship, others short, but none as yet, hit.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE END OF THE BATTLE.

THE night attack began about 9 p.m., and was mainly carried out by destroyers. Light cruisers were also engaged for the purpose of protecting the British line from torpedo attack. At 10.20 *Southampton* and *Dublin* were in action with no less than five enemy cruisers, and they lost many men during the fifteen minutes' unequal fight. At half-past eleven *Birmingham* sighted several big ships steering south. They were enemy battleships slipping past the British stern in the fog and darkness. During the night the fight between the light craft and the enemy ships raged fast and furious, and many German vessels were sent to their doom.

The British destroyers did splendid work that night, and won great glory. The heaviest fighting fell to the lot of the 4th Flotilla, which, after discharging two torpedoes with effect, lost *Tipperary*, which was set on fire, and sank. Two rafts were got away from the sinking vessel, and a number of survivors were afterwards picked up; but the young commander went down with his ship. A petty officer thus describes the fighting. His experiences give us an excellent idea of the fierce and confused series of encounters that took place.

"Through haze and smoke and darkness—all mixed up to baffle us—our division of destroyers raced along, and, about three minutes past midnight, plunged right into the midst of the German fleet. Being oil-fuel boats and emitting neither smoke nor flame, we were able to pounce quietly upon the enemy, and it was apparent that we gave their nerves a nasty jar. One could tell this by their manner of firing. Hurriedly they switched on their searchlights, and began to bang away at us with all the guns they could bring to bear, and with some they could not bring to bear, judging from the wild way in which some of their rounds flew overhead. A sure

sign this that the men working them had become panic-stricken, and were just blazing away without considering what they were blazing at.

"It was too dark for us to follow the enemy's movements closely, though we could see the loom of some of his ships and locate others by the flash from their guns; but we saw enough to show us that our sudden descent upon the enemy had thrown him into disorder, and some of his ships appeared to be acting in a very demoralized sort of way. Perhaps that was not to be greatly wondered at, for a destroyer attack at midnight is anything but a pleasant thing for a fleet to face." *

The same writer also tells us that the enemy ships turned their searchlights on the destroyers, and that the destroyers responded by firing at the searchlights. The consequence was that the searchlights were switched on and off in the most confusing fashion. "The enemy dared not keep a beam steadied upon one object long, lest our light guns should send a projectile crashing through the lens."

Of course, the guns carried by the destroyers were mere pea-shooters compared with the heavy weapons of the battleships and cruisers. One shell from a big ship was quite sufficient to send any one of the daring little craft to the bottom. When you realize this, you will begin to understand the splendid courage and resolution of the crews: they did not hesitate to fight the biggest ships of the German fleet.

"Heavy guns blazed furiously at us, and at such close range that they could not miss. It was not just one or two guns, but dozens, that were turned upon us. Only one result was possible. We were crushed by the weight of their fire. You may imagine what bombardment from armour-piercing guns would mean to such fragile craft as destroyers. Of our lot, only one vessel came through unhurt, and it is marvellous that she escaped."

Fortune was literally torn to pieces by heavy shells. Her midships gun was blown into the sea, and most of her crew were killed. The engines were torn out by another shell, and she settled down fast by the bows. But even while she sank she let the Germans feel her sting. The foremost torpedo tube was still in working order, so a petty officer and others trained it upon the nearest German ship. Just as they were firing it a shell came aboard and blew the tube into the air. The torpedo was actually discharged while the tube was rising, and, what is more, it ran towards its mark.

* *London Magazine*, September 1916.

The Last Moments of the Destroyer "Fortune."

(*From the drawing by Maurice Randall. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

This picture illustrates *Fortune* firing her last torpedo, and an enemy shell blowing the tube into the air at the moment that the torpedo left it.

Shortly afterwards *Fortune* sank, but by means of rafts some thirty-five of the crew managed to keep afloat. For a couple of hours they drifted to and fro, while the battle raged furiously all around, and over their heads as well. So deafening was the thunder of the guns that they had to shout to be heard by their nearest companions.

"Dimly we could see the big ships moving; the flame from their gun muzzles would light up all the hull for a second, and then die out. It was as though the vessels suddenly sprang out of the night and as suddenly faded back into it again. Most uncanny sight of all was that of a German Dreadnought on fire. She lay some distance from us, and was glowing from stem to stern like a red-hot cinder. One of her guns still continued banging away; all the others had presumably been put out of action. But struggling there she made a fine target for British gunners, who made full use of the opportunity, and poured so much metal into her that she soon went hissing to the bottom."

About six in the morning a destroyer came along and attempted without success to pick up the survivors of *Fortune*. Later on *Moresby*, which was returning from a chase in which she had torpedoed an enemy vessel, came up together with some of our light cruisers. The submarines which infested the waters were driven off, *Moresby* dropped her whaler, and seventeen men out of the thirty-five who took the rafts when *Fortune* went down were saved.

I despair of being able to give you a picture of that terrible night in the North Sea. You must think of the black darkness, stabbed every few moments by flashes of fire, or the whole sky for miles around lit up by the leaping flames of a big ship in its last throes. You must think of the awful roar of the guns, which seemed to sound even louder than by day, and the cold, white fingers of the searchlights, like some uncanny monsters of the deep searching the ocean for their prey. "The searchlights at times," wrote an eye-witness, "made the sea as white as marble, on which the destroyers moved black as cockroaches on a floor." And above all, you must think of those gallant Britons who were fighting and dying in that nightmare of horrors in order that you and I might continue to dwell in freedom and safety in the land of our fathers. We must never forget them; they gave their lives for us.

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The dawn of 1st June broke thick and foggy, and the look-

outs in the foretops could barely see more than four miles around them. The British fleet was then lying south and west of the Horn Reef, and now it turned northward to search for the enemy. But during the night the German ships had scattered like a flight of wild duck scared by shot. In the fog and darkness they had slipped astern of the British ships, and steamed as rapidly as they could for their harbours. On the 1st June there was not a single German craft afloat in the so-called German Ocean. The British fleet swept the seas until 1.15 p.m., but there was no sign of the enemy. Further searching and waiting were useless, so Sir John Jellicoe ordered his ships back to their bases. By 9.30 p.m. on 2nd June they were at sea again, eager for another fight, but could discover no enemy.

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On an earlier page I told you that the Germans meant to claim a victory, no matter what the result of the engagement might be. As soon as their crippled and battered ships were safely in harbour, the gates of the dockyards were locked in order that no prying eyes might discover the real condition of the fleet. Then a great victory was announced. The German people were told that the British fleet had been beaten. The first great blow had been struck, and the ancient glory of the British race had disappeared. The German losses, so it was said, were small. Only one old battleship, three small cruisers, and five destroyers had gone down.

Of course this was a fairy tale, meant to hearten the German people, who stood in great need of a victory. Before long the Germans were forced to admit that other ships had been lost, and their deluded people were told that these losses had been concealed " for military reasons." Our Admiralty promptly issued a list of all the British ships that had been sunk, but said little or nothing about the German losses. Many people thereupon jumped to the conclusion that we had suffered a reverse. Our sailors, however, knew better, and they were surprised and angry that such a false idea had got abroad. There was not an admiral, nor a captain, nor an officer, nor a man in all the fleet who did not know that the enemy had been outgeneralled and outfought. We had lost *Queen Mary*, *Indefatigable*, *Invincible*, *Defence*, *Black Prince*, *Warrior*, and eight destroyers; and most of their crews—some five or six thousand men—had gone down with them. " They fell," said

Sir John Jellicoe in his dispatch, "doing their duty nobly—a death which they would have been the first to desire."

How well our sailors bore themselves on that never-to-be-forgotten 31st of May may be gathered from the glowing tribute which Sir John Jellicoe paid them in his dispatch :—

"The conduct of officers and men throughout the day and night actions was entirely beyond praise. No words of mine could do them justice. On all sides it is reported to me that the glorious traditions of the past were most worthily upheld: whether in heavy ships, cruisers, light cruisers, or destroyers, the same admirable spirit prevailed. Officers and men were cool and determined, with a cheeriness that would have carried them through anything. The heroism of the wounded was the admiration of all. I cannot adequately express the pride with which the spirit of the Fleet filled me."

With the generosity of the truly brave, Sir John also testified to the courage of the Germans :—

"The enemy fought with the gallantry that was expected of him. We particularly admired the conduct of those on board a disabled German light cruiser which passed down the British line shortly after deployment, under a heavy fire, which was returned by the only gun left in action."

Time-Table of the Battle of Jutland.

May 31–June 1, 1916.

p.m. **MAY 31.**

2.20. *Galatea* reports presence of enemy.

2.35. Smoke of enemy ships sighted to eastward.

2.45. *Engadine* sends up seaplane to scout.

3.30. Beatty forms line of battle, and one minute later sights enemy.

3.48. Action commences—range 18,500 yards.
("*Queen Mary*" *sunk.*)

4.8. Evan-Thomas's squadron opens fire—range 20,000 yards.

4.15. Our destroyers move out for torpedo attack.
(*During this attack the destroyers* "*Nomad*" *and* "*Nestor*" *were sunk.*)

4.18. The third enemy ship on fire.
("*Indefatigable*" *sunk.*)

4.38. *Southampton* reports von Hipper's fleet ahead.

4.42. Beatty sights enemy's main battle fleet. Runs northward to lead the German ships towards Jellicoe.

4.57. Our ships standing out against clear horizon; German ships shrouded by mist.

5.10. *Fearless* reports enemy heavy ship on fire.

5.35. Beatty gradually hauling to north-east, keeping range of enemy.

5.50. Jellicoe's advance ships sighted.

5.56. Beatty alters course to east, in order to cross **T** of German line.

6.14. Jellicoe forms line of battle.

6.17. First shots fired by Jellicoe's fleet.
("*Defence*" *sunk;* "*Warrior*" *disabled, and sank in night.*)

6.21. Hood leads his squadron into action.
("*Invincible*" *sunk.*)

6.30. 4th Battle Squadron, with flagship *Iron Duke*, opens fire.

6.30.–7.20. 2nd Battle Squadron in action.

6.50. Beatty's ships cross **T** of German line. Light bad. Enemy ships lost sight of.

7.6. Whole British fleet steams south, chasing enemy.

p.m.

7.17. Sun below clouds. Light improves. Enemy ships seen and re-engaged.

7.45. Destroyers at head of enemy's line emit palls of smoke to cover retreat of their big ships, which are soon lost to sight.

7.58. British cruisers ordered to sweep westward and discover whereabouts of head of enemy's line.

8.20. Beatty turns west to support. Leading ship of enemy on fire and listing heavily to port. *Princess Royal* sets fire to a three-funnelled battleship. *New Zealand* and *Indomitable* report third ship forced out of line, heeling over and on fire.

8.40. Heavy shock felt—probably due to big enemy ship blowing up.

9. Enemy entirely out of sight. Jellicoe disposes his fleet for the night. Night attack of destroyers begins.
("*Black Prince*" *sunk.*)

10.20. 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron in action for fifteen minutes with enemy cruiser and four light cruisers.

a.m.

2.35. *Moresby* fires torpedo at enemy battleships, and two minutes later feels shock of the explosion on board vessel aimed at.
(*During the night the destroyers* "*Tipperary*," "*Ardent*," "*Fortune*," "*Shark*," "*Sparrowhawk*," *and* "*Turbulent*" *were sunk.*)

JUNE 1.

Daylight. Battle fleet, then south and west of Horn Reef, turns north in search of enemy.

4. Fleet engages a Zeppelin for about five minutes.

11. British fleet watching and waiting for enemy.

p.m.

1.15. Jellicoe concludes that enemy has succeeded in returning to port. Shapes course for his bases, which are reached Friday, June 2.

p.m. **JUNE 2.**

9.30. Fleet re-fuelled and re-supplied with ammunition. Sails at 9.30 p.m., but searches in vain for the enemy.

The Last Phase of

When night fell, British destroyers dashed into the midst of the German fleet and carried out fierce and the night battle which is illustrated above:—

"During the night the British heavy ships were not attacked; but the Fourth, Eleventh, and Twelfth delivered a series of very gallant and successful attacks on the enemy, causing him heavy losses.

"It was during these attacks that severe losses in the Fourth Flotilla occurred, including that of *Tipperary*, perfection, and although suffering severely from the fire of the enemy, a heavy toll of enemy vessels was

"Two torpedoes were seen to take effect on enemy vessels as the result of the attacks of the Fourth Flotilla, (Lieutenant-Commander Arthur Marsden), *Ambuscade* (Lieutenant-Commander Gordon A. Coles), or *Garland*

"The attack carried out by the Twelfth Flotilla (Captain Anselan J. B. Stirling) was admirably executed. the *Kaiser* class, was taken by surprise. A large number of torpedoes was fired, including some at the second second attack, made twenty minutes later by *Mænad* (Commander John P. Champion) on the five vessels still

"The destroyers were under a heavy fire from the light cruisers on reaching the rear of the line, but the material injuries. In the *Onslaught* Sub-Lieutenant Harry W. A. Kemmis, assisted by Midshipman Reginald reached her home port.

"During the attack carried out by the Eleventh Flotilla, *Castor* (Commodore James R. P. Hawkesley), Sir David Beatty reports:—

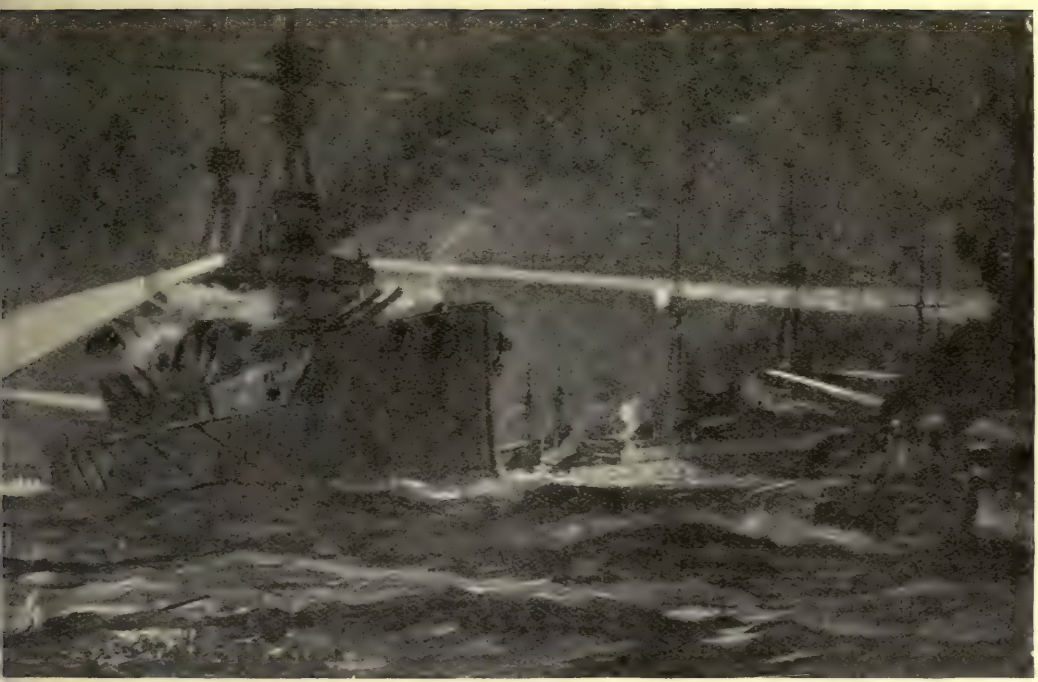
"The Thirteenth Flotilla, under the command of Captain James U. Farie, in *Champion*, took station astern flotilla at high speed. She passed close to *Petard* and *Turbulent*, switched on searchlights and opened a enemy destroyers. *Moresby* reports four ships of *Deutschland* class sighted at 2.35 a.m., at whom she fired

"*Fearless* and the 1st Flotilla were very usefully employed as a submarine screen during the earlier part cruisers without fouling the battleships, and therefore took station at the rear of the line. She sighted during her, but believes she was attacked by destroyers further astern. A heavy explosion was observed astern not

"There were many gallant deeds performed by the destroyer flotillas; they surpassed the very highest

"Apart from the proceedings of the flotillas, the Second Light-cruiser Squadron in the rear of the battle and four light cruisers, during which period *Southampton* and *Dublin* (Captain Albert C. Scott) suffered the squadron appeared to be very effective.

Abdiel, ably commanded by Commander Berwick Curtis, carried out her duties with the success which



the Great Battle. [*By permission of The Sphere.*

determined attacks on the big ships. The following is an extract from Sir John Jellicoe's dispatch describing

Flotillas, under Commodore Hawkesley and Captains Charles J. Wintour and Anselan J. B. Stirling,

with the gallant leader of the flotilla, Captain Wintour. He had brought his flotilla to a high pitch of
taken, and many gallant actions were performed by the flotilla.
one being from *Spitfire* (Lieutenant-Commander Clarence W. E. Trelawny), and the other from either *Ardent*
(Lieutenant-Commander Reginald S. Goff).
The squadron attacked, which consisted of six large vessels, besides light cruisers, and comprised vessels of
and third ships in the line ; those fired at the third ship took effect, and she was observed to blow up. A
remaining, resulted in the fourth ship in the line being also hit.
Onslaught (Lieutenant-Commander Arthur G. Onslow, D.S.C.) was the only vessel which received any
G. Arnot, R.N.R., the only executive officers not disabled, brought the ship successfully out of action and

leading the flotilla, engaged and sank an enemy torpedo-boat destroyer at point-blank range."

of the battle fleet for the night. At 0.30 a.m. on Thursday, 1st June, a large vessel crossed the rear of the
heavy fire, which disabled *Turbulent*. At 3.30 a.m. *Champion* was engaged for a few minutes with four
one torpedo. Two minutes later an explosion was felt by *Moresby* and *Obdurate*.
of the 31st May. At 6.10 p.m., when joining the Battle Fleet, *Fearless* was unable to follow the battle
the night a battleship of the *Kaiser* class steaming fast and entirely alone. She was not able to engage
long after.
expectations that I had formed of them.
fleet was in close action for about fifteen minutes at 10.20 p.m. with a squadron comprising one enemy cruiser
rather heavy casualties, although their steaming and fighting qualities were not impaired. The return fire of

has always characterized her work."

CHAPTER XXXII.

SAILORS' STORIES OF THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND.

BEFORE I begin to tell you stories of the great fight, let us ask ourselves the question: Was the Battle of Jutland a British victory? It certainly was not such a complete victory as Nelson achieved at the Battle of the Nile, when he sank or captured eleven out of the nineteen ships opposed to him; nor was it as sweeping as the victory at Trafalgar, when twenty ships out of the forty in the combined fleets of France and Spain either surrendered or were destroyed. In the Battle of Jutland, though we made no such wholesale havoc of the enemy, he undoubtedly suffered heavier losses than we did. According to Sir John Jellicoe's careful calculation, the Germans lost three battleships, one battle cruiser, five light cruisers, one of which may have been a battleship, six destroyers, and one submarine. These were certain and observed losses. In addition, one first-class battleship, one battle cruiser, and three destroyers were seen to be so severely hit that in all likelihood they went down before reaching harbour. Further, most of the ships which escaped were so badly damaged that they were unable to leave harbour for weeks afterwards. Our losses, you will remember, were three battle cruisers, three armoured cruisers, and eight destroyers. The enemy's losses were actually heavier than ours, and proportionately they were far greater. If we only take into consideration the balance of damage done, victory must be ascribed to the British fleet.

But there is another and a far more important side of the question which we must consider. For twenty-two months of war the British fleet had blockaded Germany, and the German navy had not dared to come out to try to break the blockade. On May 31, 1916, it put its fortune to the touch, and the stake

for which it played was that command of the North Sea which we had enjoyed so long. Had we suffered defeat, German warships would have been free to come and go at their will, to prey upon our shipping, to sink our transports, and to bombard our ports; while their merchant vessels would once more traverse the ocean routes of the world. When the battle was over there was not a German ship to be seen on the so-called German Ocean. Our control of the North Sea was as complete as ever. Whatever object the German navy may have had in coming out, it certainly failed to achieve that object. He who in any struggle prevents his enemy from accomplishing his purpose is surely the victor, or words have lost their meaning. The Battle of Jutland—the greatest naval battle of history—*was* a British victory, and far-sighted men have not hesitated to call it a decisive victory.

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Now I must keep the promise implied by the heading of this chapter, and tell you some sailors' yarns of the battle. First we will read a middy's account of the fight.

"I thought we were out on a stunt, but I did not think it was going to be the 'pukha'* stunt. I was in my bunk having a nap after lunch when my servant came and woke me up, and told me that we had to take battle stations. I tumbled out pretty quick, and got to my place. I had three *matelots*† with me in my position, and I don't think the eldest could have been more than eighteen. They were topping chaps. They had never been in action before, and though they looked a bit white when the first shot went off—I felt a bit shaken myself—they bucked up like Trojans, and after a few minutes were whistling and singing as if nothing particular except battle practice was going on.

"Those first few minutes were pretty bad, for the Huns got in on us first; and their shooting was just wonderful—every shell seemed to get home. When we started—and I think it was *Lion*, Beatty's ship, which opened the ball—we gave them something to go on with.

"But, my goodness! what a sight it was. I have seen some ships in my time, and a good number at a time; but I would hardly have believed there were so many ships in the

* Indian word meaning real, substantial.

† French word for sailors (pron. *mat-e-lō*).

world as I saw on that Wednesday. The water seemed alive with them, and the farther you looked the more ships there seemed to be. Of course of the general action I have only a very vague and confused idea. We seemed to engage two or three ships, and then they seemed to disappear or limp away. We got hit fairly often, but never in a vital spot, and the longer the game went on the wilder the Huns' shooting became. Our fellows were as steady as rocks, and our shooting was as good as at battle practice—and that's pretty good.

"But with the awful noise one could hardly realize what was really going on. I saw *Queen Mary* blown right out of the water, and *Invincible* and *Indefatigable* sunk. Talking of *Invincible*, there was one sight which I shall never forget. It was the pluckiest thing I have ever seen. When the ship went down four of the chaps managed to collar hold of a raft. As we steamed ahead into action we saw these men on the raft, and at first thought they must be Huns. But as we passed by—for, of course, we could not stop for anything—the four got up on their feet and cheered us like mad! It was the finest thing I have seen.

"The 'Black Navy,' as we call the torpedo-boat destroyers, were absolutely magnificent; they just wiped the floor with the Huns' torpedo-boat destroyers, and the way they tackled the big ships was simply top-hole. I saw one—I think it was *Onslaught*—take on a big ship (I believe it was *Hindenburg*, or one of that class) and sink her.

"There were some extraordinary escapes. One chap I know was in a turret. One shell took the top of the turret clean off. Then another came slap through the side. The shock threw this chap—he is a captain of the Marines—into the sea. He was picked up, and except that he was a bit shaken and stunned, he was all right, and is on duty now."

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The middy whose account you have just read saw *Queen Mary*, *Invincible*, and *Indefatigable* sunk. A naval expert, writing in the *Daily News*, believes that two of these ships were lost not by gun-fire, but by the explosion of their magazines. The Germans, he says, were firing shells which when they burst flung out flashes of flame 200 feet long. According to his account, the shells blew off the top of the turrets, and the flashes shot down the ammunition hoists into the magazines

and caused the terrible explosions which sent the gallant ships to the bottom.

* * * * * * *

Here is a description of the battle from the pen of another midshipman:—

"As you no doubt have read, the weather was very misty; which kept us from a decisive victory. It was very exciting, and once we were in it I quite enjoyed it; but the waiting before wasn't very nice. My action station is in a turret right in the forepart of the ship, and I viewed the action through a periscope in the turret. The noise was deafening, and I had lost my ear protectors; but I was too excited to notice the noise. The battle cruisers were firing just in front, and doing terrible damage. A destroyer just in front of us had its funnel blown off, and started to blaze away. It was a desperate sight. Then a big ship close to us blew up amidships, and started to sink. I got a fine view of her. There were lots of men hanging from the stern and on rafts in the water. A destroyer stood by to pick them up. Huge splashes came from German shells, falling into the water fairly close to us, and some ricochetted over us (I can't spell it). I am absolutely none the worse for it. Our captain and commander both wore white heather in their caps. As the first gun in the turret I was in fired, our gun's crew gave a great cheer, which made me feel all funny. I thought a lot of you" (the middy is writing to his mother), "and how wonderfully good you've been to me all through my life. I also thought of daddy. I had quite a long time to think in before we got into it. Next morning we met a Zepp and fired at it; but it disappeared behind a cloud. I have a memento in the shape of a tube which fired the second shot in our turret.

"We had a memorial service this morning, the hymns being 499, 401, 140. At the same time the dead were buried ashore. We sent a midshipman to assist in carrying the coffin of a midshipman. All the next night we had to sleep in our turrets. An overcoat laid on a steel floor was my bed. We expected a destroyer attack in the night, and some ships had one. Our fierce part of the action lasted about forty minutes. After a few shots from the turret it became very hot, and we all took off our coats. We went into the action with a big Union Jack flying and two white ensigns on the mast, and another ensign

astern, so there was no mistaking our nationality. The next morning we were continually passing wreckage and bodies, some with lifebelts on."

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A commander thus relates his experiences :—

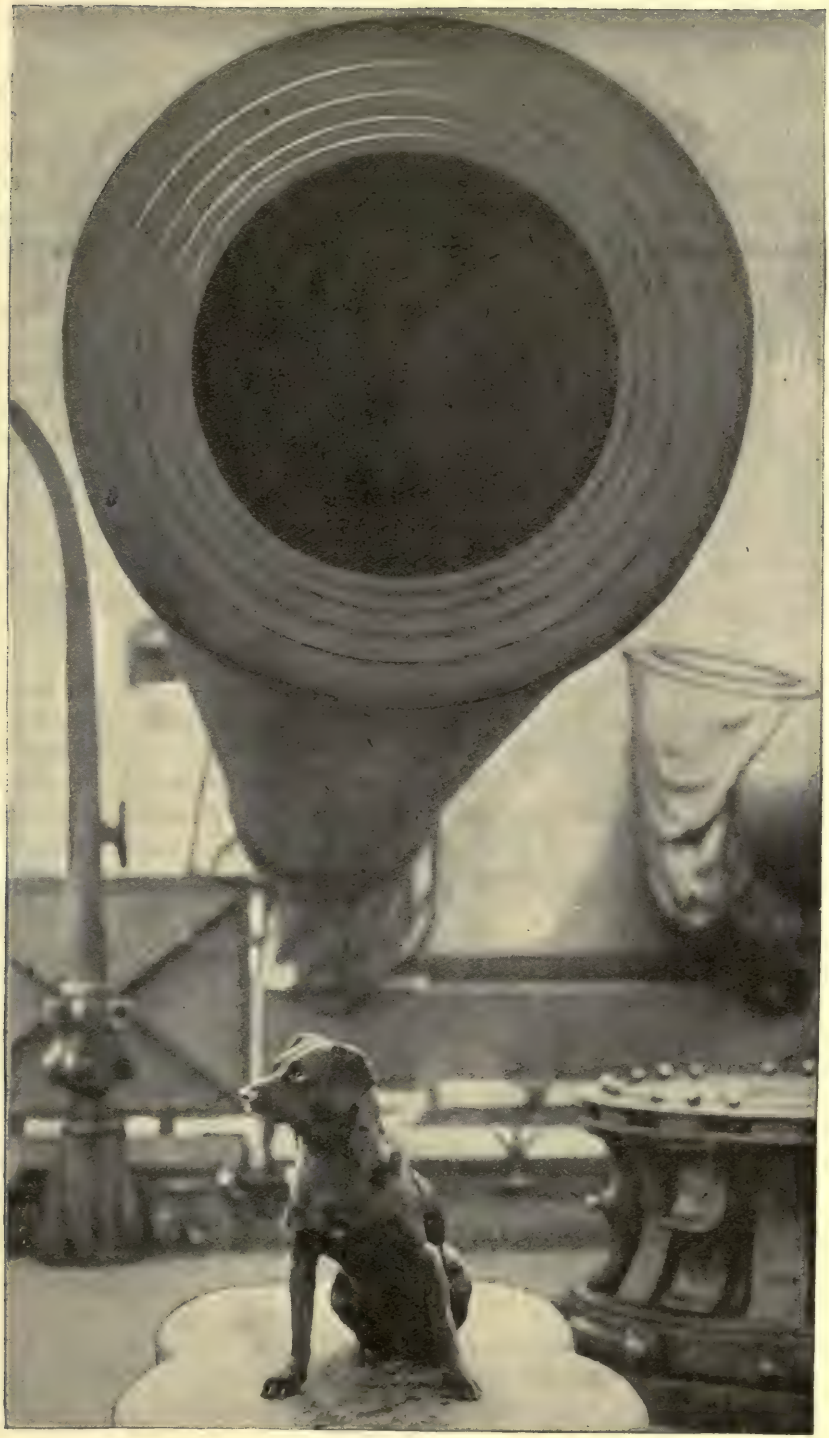
" It was altogether unimaginable, and even now I have only a sort of confused idea of what happened. Moreover, I am still rather deaf from the terrible gun-fire. Although we rather expected to find some Huns about, we did not think that it was going to be ' The Day.'

" We came upon them rather suddenly. They opened fire upon us, and never in all my life have I heard such a terrific din. It was like a hundred thunderstorms, and Brock's fireworks all let loose at the same time. The first four minutes of the battle saw most of the damage done to our big ships. I saw *Queen Mary* and *Indefatigable* go down. It would be wrong to say *Queen Mary* went down : she went up. Some of the shells must have landed right into the magazines, for the great vessel went right up in pieces into the air.

" Then *Indefatigable* received a most tremendous pounding. You could see the big ship literally staggering under the enormous weight of metal she received. I think that she must have gone down in about two minutes after she received the first broadside. Some people aver that *Queen Mary* went down as the result of a Zeppelin dropping a bomb into her magazine ; but I am convinced that it was gun-fire that sank her. But we had not much time for looking about us.

" Admiral Beatty opened fire in *Lion*. The noise was perfectly awful. We soon began to shake them up a bit, and though we were inferior in numbers and lighter craft, we got a jolly good grip on them. Of course, what we wanted to do was to hold on to them at any cost until Admiral Jellicoe with the big lot could come up ; then we knew that we should blow them out of the water : so naturally Beatty was prepared, and so were all of us, to lose some cruisers. The only point was to hold on at any cost. Unfortunately, we could not quite do it, for, as soon as they gathered that Jellicoe was coming up, the Huns ran for their lives. They were shaken to the core, and I am absolutely certain that they have lost far more ships than they have admitted.

" Personally, apart from the big ships they have lost, I am



His Master's Voice. [*Photo, Cribb.*

Sir John Jellicoe's dog Spot beneath one of the 15-inch guns of *Iron Duke*.

convinced that they lost about twenty torpedo-boat destroyers; and when the true facts are known, I think it will be discovered that we not only chased a bigger and heavier fleet than our own back into port, but that we inflicted far heavier losses on them than they did on us.

"Another thing I particularly noticed which showed that we rattled them pretty badly. During the first four minutes of the scrap the Huns' shooting was extremely fine; it seemed as if 'every bullet found its billet,' so to speak. The moment we started in on them, however, their shooting became extremely wild and inaccurate. To start with, the salvos flopped all right on to the mark; but afterwards they went all anyhow, else our losses would have been much heavier. This proves to me that the Huns have no real stomach for sea-fighting. Our shooting was wonderfully good, especially that of *Tiger*."

* * * * * * *

A petty officer's impression of the fight was as follows:—

"Our fellows were in the best of spirits, making fun all the time, but pumping it into the enemy as hard as they could. Six shells hit us, but not one pierced our armour, and at the finish we were still fighting. The enemy gunners are not to be laughed at. When Jellicoe came up the Germans 'hopped it,' and some of Jellicoe's ships never got into action at all."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MORE STORIES OF THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND.

A SIGNALMAN on the ill-fated *Warrior* thus tells the story of the part played by his ship :—

" We went into action prepared for heavier losses than we suffered. It was our part to hang on to the enemy, and we did. The battle-cruiser fleet came up from a different direction from the great battleships, in front of which *Warrior* and *Defence* were sent out. They moved northward for a time parallel to the main German fleet off the Jutland coast. What did us was the haze. It kept coming up thickest from the east, and our ships were against the afternoon sunlight, and the more plainly visible. *Warrior* sighted the enemy about two hours after the battle cruisers began the fight, and opened fire in ten minutes. I believe four or five German battleships of the main fleet were firing at us. We were struck by about fifteen big shells, mostly near the engine-room. One shell penetrated close to the ammunition passage, but failed to explode, or *Warrior* would have been blown sky high.

" Meanwhile *Warrior* was herself pouring shell into a German cruiser, which I believe was the *Wiesbaden*. It's my belief we bagged her. She was a long thing, with three fat funnels, and we struck her with a salvo of six guns—six shells in a row—and down she went. At the same time my mind was so concentrated on my work that I didn't either see or hear the *Defence* blown up, though she was our next ship, only four cables away. She was sunk by two salvos of four or five shells from 12-inch or 14-inch guns.

" As we came up to the scene of action where the battle cruisers had been engaged for about two hours, we saw a destroyer with her boat down picking up the survivors of

Queen Mary as coolly as if no battle was going on. One of the huge shells which struck *Warrior* gashed the upper deck with a huge rent. One shell burst in the engine-room, and killed many. Several were severely wounded, and the total of dead will come to about eighty. I want to praise especially the extreme heroism of the stokers. They kept on at their work after the engine-room was flooded. Then they drew the fires and quietly came up to the deck. The signalmen on the tops also remained in their position throughout. One on the maintop was killed, having both his legs blown off. Five or six messenger boys also stood steady, without 'panicking' at all, and went quietly to their action station, though none of them had seen fighting before. Apart from the smashing blows of the big shells there were very few casualties, but a few were gassed by the fumes of the shells. As the ship began to fill she slowly turned half round to draw out of action, the signal 'Not under control' being raised. As I shifted my position to look after this signal I saw a shell crash just where I had been standing, and I thought to myself, 'There goes my old locker!' As *Warrior* turned almost helpless out of action, I saw the whole main fleet rushing forward to attack the head of the German line."

* * * * * * *

Another seaman * thus describes the end of *Warrior*:—

"*Engadine* took us in tow about 8 p.m. After that we found what we could to eat, and had supper. But throughout the night there was little or no sleep for anybody. *Warrior* was leaking badly, in spite of all efforts to keep out the water, and she gradually settled lower and lower. . . .

"One could not easily imagine a more perilous situation than the one we were in; yet I did not see any one exhibit the least sign of nervousness or disquiet. Whatever the men might have thought they kept it to themselves, and steadily 'carried on' with the jobs allotted to them.

"Morning dawned, with *Warrior* in very bad case. She had developed a heavy list to port, and her decks were practically awash. Clearly she could not last much longer. Only one possible course was open to the captain, and he took it. *Engadine* was ordered to come alongside, and we prepared to abandon ship. . . .

* *London Magazine*, September 1916.

A Scene during the Midnight Battle.

(*From the picture by C. Clark. By permission of The Sphere.*)

A German battleship sinking. The grim spectacle was revealed by the light of many searchlights flashing across the deep.

"Transferring the wounded men proved a difficult thing to do, but we managed it with only one mishap. A man fell from the stretcher whilst being lifted from ship to ship, and dropped between the vessels; whereupon a flight-lieutenant of *Engadine* pluckily jumped in and rescued him.

"Having transhipped our wounded, the rest of us followed them, Captain Molteno being the last one to leave *Warrior*. Now *Engadine* dropped astern, and then, having got clear, steamed up again past the sinking *Warrior*. All of us gave our old ship three hearty farewell cheers as we left her behind."

* * * * * * *

On 16th September the Admiralty issued a list of the officers and men who had specially distinguished themselves in the Battle of Jutland. It was a long list; but you must not suppose that it included all who had done valiantly in the great fight. Sir John Jellicoe confessed that he found the task of singling out those who were to receive honours very difficult, because all had played their parts so well. The following three heroes were awarded the Victoria Cross :—

COMMANDER THE HON. E. B. S. BINGHAM.

I am sure that you have not forgotten the gallant attack made by our destroyers at the beginning of the battle. Commander Bingham, in *Nestor*, led his division in the most gallant manner, first against the enemy destroyers and then against their battle cruisers. Later on he sighted the enemy battle fleet, and, followed by the one remaining destroyer of his division (*Nicator*), closed in to within three thousand yards, in order to reach a favourable position for firing his torpedoes. The German battleships poured a hurricane of fire upon the two little craft, and *Nestor* was so badly crippled that she sank some time later. It was supposed that Commander Bingham had gone down with his ship; but afterwards he was reported to be a prisoner in Germany. His Victoria Cross was won by magnificent daring.

MAJOR FRANCIS JOHN WILLIAM HARVEY, Royal Marine Light Infantry.

Major Harvey did not live to wear the blue ribbon of valour which he so nobly won during the great battle. A shell burst in his gun house, and killed or put out of action almost every man in it. He himself received a mortal wound; but even while the agony of death was upon him he spent his last moments

John Travers Cornwell, V.C. [*Photo, Central News.*

The boy hero of the Battle of Jutland, aged 16½ years.

in saving his comrades. With great presence of mind and devotion to duty he ordered the magazine to be flooded, and by doing so prevented the ship from being blown up. Shortly afterwards he died. You will search long in the annals of heroism before you find a deed worthy to rank with his.

JOHN TRAVERS CORNWELL, First-class Boy, H.M.S. *Chester*.

This young hero was an East Ham boy, and had been a scholar at the Walton Road schools. As a schoolboy he was in no way distinguished. His master described him as "an ordinary English boy." God grant that all British boys, wherever they may dwell, may be as "ordinary" as he!

He had only been twenty-nine days at sea when he went into action. You will remember that his ship, *Chester* (see p. 264), was sent on a scouting mission, and was furiously assailed for twenty minutes by four or five enemy cruisers. A deluge of shot swept down upon her, and her casualties were very heavy. It was during that scene of horror and destruction that "an ordinary English boy" attracted his captain's attention by splendid devotion to duty. Admiral Beatty in his dispatch thus describes the lad's heroism :—

"*Boy (First Class) John Travers Cornwell of 'Chester' was mortally wounded early in the action. He nevertheless remained standing alone at a most exposed post, quietly awaiting orders, until the end of the action, with the gun's crew dead and wounded all round him. His age was under 16½ years. I regret that he has since died, but I recommend his case for special recognition in justice to his memory, and as an acknowledgment of the high example set by him.*"

Cornwell was a sight-setter, an important position for one so young. It was his business to receive by telephone the orders sent from the fire control as to the laying and discharge of his gun. He wore tele-pads, and thus amidst the roar of the cannonading was able to hear the instructions sent to him from headquarters. In the first five minutes of the battle he received a terrible wound ; but though he suffered agonies, he never left his post until the end of the action. His shipmates said that during the whole of the fight he kept his tele-pads on, and looked steadfastly towards the bridge, so that if the telephones broke down he might hear the orders shouted to him.

Shortly after the battle he died, and was buried in a common grave; but when the story of his striking heroism became known, his body was exhumed, and on Saturday, 29th July, was reinterred with great honour at the Manor Park Cemetery, East Ham. Six boys of *Chester*, Cornwell's mates, formed a guard of honour, and a party of bluejackets drew the gun-carriage on which lay the coffin, draped in the Union Jack. The bishop of the diocese, the mayor and councillors, and all the leading men of the borough joined in the procession, along with naval cadets and fifty of the hero's old schoolmates, led by their master. Sir David Beatty, the captain, officers, and crew of *Chester*, and the Royal Navy sent wreaths. Dr. Macnamara, himself an old schoolmaster, represented the Admiralty, and at the graveside paid an eloquent tribute to Cornwell's magnificent courage. A volley was fired, the "Last Post" was sounded, and the mortal remains of the gallant lad were committed to mother earth. On the coffin was the simple but glorious epitaph:—

"*Faithful unto Death.*"

Though the earth had closed over the body of Jack Cornwell, the inspiration of his example still "lived and moved and had its being." A day was set apart on which the story of his heroism was told to the children of every elementary school in the country, and collections were made to endow a "Jack Cornwell" ward for disabled soldiers and marines in the Star and Garter Hospital at Richmond. A Mansion House meeting was held, and arrangements were made for establishing a national memorial in the shape of cottages for disabled seamen, and naval scholarships for deserving boys. A leading artist promised to paint a picture commemorating the deed, a reproduction of which was to find a place on the walls of some thousands of schools. We part from Jack Cornwell feeling more than ever the truth of the noble words with which Dickens concludes the story of Little Nell: "Of every tear that sorrowing mortals shed on such green graves some good is born, some gentler nature comes. In the Destroyer's steps there spring up bright creations that defy his power, and his dark path becomes a way of light to heaven."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HOW A GREAT WAR CHIEF DIED.

FOUR days after the great naval battle which I have described at length, a sea tragedy took place which robbed us of the man whom all the British world regarded as the organizer of victory. In earlier pages of this work I told you something of the brilliant career of Field-Marshal Lord Kitchener. You will remember that he was a student at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, when the Franco-German War broke out, but at the time was staying with his father in North France. Without asking permission of the British authorities, he immediately enlisted in the French army, and saw some service. While he was fighting, a young artillery lieutenant named Joffre was undergoing his baptism of fire. Kitchener and Joffre were destined to meet forty-four years later—the one as War Secretary of Britain, the other as Commander-in-Chief of the French armies.

Kitchener left Woolwich in 1871, and a few years later we find him engaged on surveying work in Palestine and Cyprus. Then he went to Egypt, where he spent a busy life organizing and fighting, and in 1890 was appointed Sirdar, or Chief, of the Egyptian Army. He owed his promotion to merit alone, and rose to his high rank by dint of hard and devoted work, and an inability to understand the meaning of the word "impossible."

In 1896 came the first great opportunity of his life. The Mahdi had arisen, and had won back the Sudan from us. It was Kitchener's task to restore it once more to the British Empire. In the course of a brilliant campaign he utterly routed the Mahdi's forces in the two battles of Atbara and Omdurman, and firmly established British power in the upper valley of the Nile. For this splendid service he was raised

Field-Marshal Lord Kitchener of Khartum and of Broome.
Born June 24, 1850; drowned at sea June 5, 1916.
(*Photo, Bourne and Shepherd.*)

to the peerage. Parliament voted him £30,000, and warmly thanked him "for the distinguished skill and ability with which he planned and conducted the campaign on the Nile of 1896–98."

Kitchener was now regarded as the foremost military organizer of the British race. In 1900, during the Boer War, he was sent to South Africa as Chief of the Staff to Lord Roberts; but soon assumed full command, and waged war against the Boers by means of a system of "blockhouses" and "drives," till he secured an honourable peace on May 31, 1902. Again he received honours, a money grant, and the thanks of Parliament. In the same year he went out to India as Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army. He did great work in reorganizing our forces in the peninsula, but not without coming into conflict with the Viceroy and the Secretary for India. In 1911 he became Consul-General—that is, the real ruler—of Egypt, and this post he held when the Great War broke out.

Now that we know something of his career, let us inquire what manner of man he was. I need not describe his appearance, for it is familiar to you all. You have seen his strong face and cold, piercing eyes on many a recruiting poster, and you can never forget the beckoning finger which drew so many men to the army in the hour of Britain's need. As he towered above his fellows in inches, so he rose above them by force of his masterful character and iron will. He was a man of few friends and of few words; he neither sought nor desired the applause of the crowd. Duty was the watchword of his life, and in doing his duty he allowed nothing to turn him from his purpose. One who knew him well says: "He was not ungrateful for services rendered, but he placed work and the public service first, and when a man had become useless he threw him aside like an old rag." Efficiency, and efficiency alone, was the passport to Kitchener's favour.

When the Great War broke out his name sprang at once to men's lips. To the mass of the people he was the greatest and most successful of all living generals. His strength, his silence, his devotion, and his striking success had won the confidence of the whole nation; and when he was called upon to take up the duties of Secretary for War, all felt that the right man was in the right place. The greatest achievement of his life was the raising of vast armies by the magic of his name.

At all times he preferred to work alone, and to concentrate all power in his own hands. When the problem was one which a single brain could solve and a single hand execute, all went well. During the Great War, when the problems of raising and equipping vast armies were more than one man, however great in mind and action, could cope with, his method failed, and certain departments of his work had to be taken over by others. Nevertheless it is impossible to overpraise the magnificent service which he rendered to the Empire in the dark days of the year 1914. To him the nation turned, as to a star of hope in the sky, and found strength in his quietness and confidence.

Now we are to learn the tragic story of his death. On Monday, 5th June, Lord Kitchener with his staff embarked on the armoured cruiser *Hampshire*, bound for Archangel. He was going to Russia to consult with the chiefs of the Russian army, so that there might be a combined movement in East and West when the French and British were ready to begin their offensive. He was also concerned with arrangements for the supply of munitions to Russia. When the ship sailed the weather was wild and stormy, and the waves were running high. About eight o'clock in the evening, when *Hampshire* was off the western coast of the Orkneys, sufficiently close to the land to be seen from the shore, a terrific explosion occurred. A survivor tells us that "the ship seemed to reel backwards, as from a staggering blow; she quivered from stem to stern; men were flung down heavily, and in a moment there spread along the decks choking clouds of gun-cotton fumes."

Hampshire had struck a mine, or had been blown up by a torpedo from an enemy submarine; and there were some who declared that treachery had been at work, and that the enemy had been forewarned of Kitchener's voyage. The ship began to settle down by the bow, and wave after wave swept over her decks. Two of the survivors saw Lord Kitchener a few minutes after the disaster. He was walking aft on the quarter-deck, and was joined by three of his staff. An officer called out, "Make way for Lord Kitchener." Captain Savill, who was helping a boat's crew to clear the captain's galley, was heard to call his name three times. Nothing more is known of Lord Kitchener's last moments.

In twenty minutes *Hampshire* had sunk beneath the waves.

Four boats are said to have left the vessel, but all were overturned. Three floats, however, got away, and were washed ashore; but of the crew of 700 men, only twelve ever reached land.

One of the survivors, Rogerson, sat astride a float for five hours, supporting a boy by each arm till they slipped from his grasp.

"One of these lads," he says, "was the smallest and youngest boy aboard the ship. But it was he who, during that first awful hour, cheered his older mates by his example."

* * * * * * *

The news of Lord Kitchener's death filled the whole Empire with deep sorrow, and the shock was felt as much by our Allies as by us. The British army went into mourning, and grief was as widespread as when Queen Victoria died. Men sorrowed, but steeled their minds, and were even more determined than before to press on with the war. More than one man who had appealed to be exempted from military service at once withdrew his appeal and joined the army. An impressive memorial service, attended by the King and all the leading men of the nation, was held at St. Paul's.

Our newspapers were filled with tributes to the great soldier who had been so suddenly and mysteriously taken from us. Several of these tributes came from our French friends. I cannot do better than conclude this sad chapter with a prose version of some lines from a poem written in a trench paper by a French colonel:—

"*Great England's valiant soldier needed a nobler tomb than a hole in the ground, and he had the noblest of all tombs. God ordered his burial; the loud waves chanted his requiem; the organ pipes were the rocky cliffs of the Orcades; his pall was the black sky; his wreaths were the snowy foam; and the flashes of lightning were his funeral torches.*"

CHAPTER XXXV.

SIX MONTHS ON THE BRITISH FRONT.—I.

SO far in this volume you have heard nothing of the British forces on the Western front. I must now very briefly sum up the work of our soldiers during the first six months of the year 1916. During the winter months of 1915 considerable changes were made in the Higher Command of the Allied armies. On December 2nd General Joffre was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the French Armies in all theatres of war, and the command of the French troops in France was entrusted to De Castelnau. Thirteen days later General Sir John French gave up the command of the British Army, which he had directed for sixteen months, and was replaced by Sir Douglas Haig, who had done so much to win the Battle of Ypres. Lieutenant-General Sir William Robertson at the same time was made Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

Before I pass on, let me tell you something of these two remarkable men. Sir Douglas Haig, a Fifeshire man, was born in 1861, and was educated at Clifton and Brasenose College, Oxford. He joined the 7th Hussars in 1885, and afterwards served with distinction in the Sudan and in South Africa. After the Boer War he received rapid promotion, and when the Great War broke out he was general officer commanding at Aldershot. You already know how skilfully and doggedly he directed the 1st Army Corps during sixteen months of unequal warfare. His promotion to Sir John French's post had long been foreseen. No better man could have been chosen. Though reserved and somewhat cold in manner, and credited with no patience for stupidity and bungling, his presence always inspired his army with the fullest confidence. He worked early and late, and expected similar devotion from his

A Rat Hunt in the Trenches: British Soldiers "ratting" with Bayonet and Terrier.

(From the picture by A. Forrester from a sketch by Frederic Villiers. By permission of The Illustrated London News.)

officers. Those who knew him best said that his bright eyes and strong chin and scrupulous neatness of dress were the outward characteristics that struck them most.

Sir Douglas Haig joined the army as an officer; but Sir William Robertson, the new Chief of the Staff, began in the ranks. His father was postmaster of the Lincolnshire village of Welbourn—a big man both in mind and body, and possessed of a strong will. His mother was gentle and lovable, and distinguished for her piety. For a time young Robertson served as a private and a non-commissioned officer; but in his twenty-ninth year he obtained a commission in the 3rd Dragoon Guards. Afterwards he was attached to the Intelligence Department of the Indian Army, and saw service on the north-west frontier. As a member of the Staff during the Boer War he was present at most of the important battles. When the Great War began he was placed in command of a division, and in January 1915 became Chief of the Staff to Sir John French. A year later he was the supreme military authority in this country, and was responsible for issuing the orders of the Government in regard to all military affairs. He had proved himself to be a man of real genius, of great force of character, and of much physical strength and endurance.

* * * * * * *

You will remember the terrible experiences of our army in Flanders during the first winter of the war. During the second winter conditions improved. Many of the front-line trenches were floored with brick and properly drained. There were recreation huts behind the line in which the men could enjoy their leisure, and in the background there was a huge camp, in which the new armies were being trained. An Italian who visited the British front at the beginning of 1916 wrote as follows :—

"The way in which your army is fed, clothed, and protected from the enmity both of man and Nature is worthy of an empire which is the greatest financial power in the world, and which is ready to sacrifice in this war its wealth for the peace and freedom of Europe."

The same observer noticed how friendly the British and French soldiers were with each other, how freely the Prince of Wales mixed with the "Tommies," and how widely his attitude towards them differed from that of the German Crown Prince towards the German privates.

During the winter months active operations were almost at a standstill. Each side was watching the other, and life in the trenches was very monotonous. Rats made their appearance in great numbers, and devoured everything which came in their way. Our men tried all sorts of devices to rid themselves of this plague, and whole regiments of dogs were sent to the front to take over the work of "ratting." A correspondent in Paris says that he saw a trainful of dogs leaving for the fighting line.

The distance between our lines and those of the Germans varied greatly. In some cases the trenches were no more than twenty or fifty yards apart. Sniping went on constantly, and almost every day there were attacks by artillery and trench mortars.

"On the British front," wrote Sir Douglas Haig, "no action on a great scale, such as that at Verdun, has been fought during the last five months (December 1915–April 1916); nevertheless our troops have been far from idle or inactive.

"Artillery and snipers are practically never silent, patrols are out in front of the lines every night, and heavy bombardments by the artillery of one or both sides take place daily in various parts of the line. Below ground there are continual mining and countermining, which, by the ever-present threat of sudden explosion and the uncertainty as to when and where it will take place, causes perhaps a more constant strain than any other form of warfare. In the air there is seldom a day, however bad the weather, when aircraft are not busy reconnoitring, photographing, and observing fire. All this is taking place constantly at any hour of the day or night, and in any part of the line.

"One form of minor activity deserves special mention—namely, the raids, or 'cutting-out parties,' which are made at least twice or three times a week against the enemy's line."

Sir Douglas Haig goes on to tell us that these raids were usually carried out at night, by a small body of men who first prepared a road through our own and the enemy's wire, then crossed the open ground unseen, and broke into the enemy's trenches, where hand-to-hand fighting went on in the darkness. This kind of warfare was especially to the liking of our men. It gave scope for gallantry, dash, and quickness of decision, and much skill and daring were displayed. As time went on, the Germans attempted to make similar raids on our line. Some of them succeeded, but more often they failed.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SIX MONTHS ON THE BRITISH FRONT.—II.

I WILL now describe some of the leading incidents on the British front during the first six months of 1916. Our line then extended from just north of Ypres to the Somme. The Ypres salient * was still a vast shell-trap, and in this area there were numerous combats, which in other wars would have been called big battles. On 14th February the Germans managed to capture part of a narrow ridge thirty or forty feet high on the northern bank of the Ypres-Comines Canal. Our trenches passed over the eastern portion of this ridge, which was known as "The Bluff." On Thursday, 2nd March, we made an effort to win back our lost trenches. Between five and six on the evening of 1st March a great collection of guns behind our line began a terrific bombardment, and our men flung a hail of bombs on the enemy. All night our machine guns played upon the lost position, and when the red sun began to shed its light on the frosty fields, the assault was delivered. For the first time the heads of our men were protected by the new steel helmets.

Our troops dashed into the enemy's trenches, and took the occupants completely by surprise. Many of the Germans had not fixed bayonets, and some were without rifles and equipment. About fifty Germans managed to get into a crater at the eastern end of "The Bluff," but made no long resistance, and were afterwards captured. Finally all our old trenches were retaken. They were found to be full of dead, and five officers and 250 prisoners were secured. Not until midday did the enemy attempt to recapture his lost position. Then parties of German bombers were sent out. They hurled their bombs behind our trenches, and held up their hands in token

* See map, p. 315.

The Northumberland and Royal Fusiliers breaking through the Enemy's Wire at St. Eloi, March 27, 1916.

(From the picture by R. Caton Woodville. By permission of The Illustrated London News.)

of surrender, whereupon the German guns were turned on them, and many were killed. Others, however, fought fiercely to the last, and some terrible combats took place in the deep dug-outs.

The next incident worthy of notice was the fighting which took place in the St. Eloi region. On 27th March we exploded a mine near St. Eloi, which blew in 100 yards of the enemy's trenches. Parties of the Northumberland Fusiliers and Royal Fusiliers, along with certain Canadian troops, at once rushed forward and carried 600 yards of the enemy's lines. A young officer of the Northumberland Fusiliers tells us that the most difficult part of the job was threading a way through the maze of wire that covered the slope in front of the enemy position. " It was very slow work, for once you set foot among the wires you presented a carefully-sighted target for the enemy machine gunners." Some of the men carried their comrades pick-a-back through the wire, the mounted men returning the enemy's fire and trying to pick off the machine gunners. In spite of the grim character of the work, the men chaffed each other about their " mounts," and urged their steeds forward with many a " gee-up." Once through the wire, our men dashed into the German trenches. Then began the dangerous work of ferreting the Germans out of their dug-outs. Some 170 prisoners were taken, and many of them were greatly mystified at the sudden appearance of the British.

A correspondent tells us that when our men were in the German trenches an officer came upon two Northumberlands with their fists up about to fight each other. He discovered to his amazement that they had quarrelled as to which of them had taken a German prisoner, then standing by. They proposed to settle the matter by a little fight of their own. This incident shows you very plainly the keenness of our men.

One other story of this gallant little fight must be told before I pass on. The day before the assault the general commanding the division addressed two of the battalions which were to take part in it. He told them the fable of the two frogs which fell into the milk. One, faint-hearted, was drowned ; the other made such a stir that he churned the milk into butter, and, sitting on the island thus formed, escaped destruction. The general then went on to point the moral of the tale. Next day he saw a wounded man being brought to the rear. Raising himself slightly upon the stretcher, the soldier

said with a cheerful smile, " Ay, but, general, I minded me of yon story you told about them frogs, but the butter wasn't strong enough to bear me ! "

Right down to 11th April the Germans made many efforts to drive us out of the mine craters. On 30th March they carried one of the craters, but by 3rd April it was in our hands again. Three days later we lost the same crater, but it was recovered by a night attack on 9th April. On the 11th we held three out of the five craters ; but on the 19th, after a heavy bombardment, the enemy carried two of them, and on the same day attacked "The Bluff" and other of our positions. They claimed to have captured 700 yards of our line, and to have taken guns and prisoners.

It was on Good Friday (21st April) that the King's Shropshire Light Infantry were ordered to recover the lost trenches. Towards evening the rain fell in torrents ; the craters became pools, and the ground was a quagmire. Through the inky darkness and the pelting rain our soldiers moved forward in three columns to the assault. The shells of the enemy flung up geysers of mud, and some of our men fell into the brimming craters and were drowned. One man stuck in the mud, and was not released until four days later.

Despite the pools and the mud and the heavy fire, the British columns got through and took the trenches. Not only so, but they repelled two German counter-attacks. Some very fine deeds of valour were done during the advance. A lance-corporal, for example, spent six and a half hours in dragging and carrying and pushing a wounded man across 600 yards of the " No Man's Land." A private who was wounded in the knee refused to leave the captured trench because he thought his comrades were too few to hold it. For thirty-six hours he helped to defend the trench, and then had to be carried back on a stretcher. One man held a sap by himself, and single-handed beat off a German attack. Many other instances of similar gallantry might be given.

We must now move farther south to the old battle-ground between Loos and Arras, where there were many violent fights during the last week of February and the early days of March. I am sure that you have not forgotten the Hohenzollern Redoubt, which at the Battle of Loos held up the left of the British advance, and was afterwards the scene of many deadly struggles.

Shortly before six on the morning of 2nd March we exploded five mines which had been tunnelled under the German front-line trenches. Many of you have seen a cinematograph picture of an exploding mine, and you can form a good idea of the huge column of earth that is hurled high into the air. On this occasion it was not only earth that was thrown up for a hundred feet, but sandbags and mangled bodies as well.

As soon as the five avalanches of earth had fallen, Irish troops pushed their way over through the debris, and occupied the newly-formed craters. They seized them at a loss of only sixty men ; but before long they had to withstand a torrent of fire from the German guns. When the craters had been literally plastered with shells of all kinds, the Germans rushed forward, and fierce bombing combats took place. During the next few days the Germans made attack after attack upon the craters, and frequently there were hand-to-hand tussles with the bayonet. The Irishmen, however, held fast, and did many deeds of daring. A lance-corporal, for example, filled two sandbags with forty bombs, and by hurling them at the enemy beat back a determined advance. On 18th March, however, the Germans exploded mines close by, and managed to capture three of the craters.

This kind of warfare was common all along the line. Ding-dong struggles, in which trenches and mine craters were lost and won, went on almost daily. As they all had similar features, there is no need to describe them in detail.

I have already told you how, when the rebellion was on foot in Dublin, the Germans tried, without the least success, to sap the loyalty of the Irishmen at the front. You will remember how gallantly the Munsters raided the trenches opposite to them, and captured the placards which invited them to surrender. Early on the morning of the 27th April the Inniskillings and Dublin Fusiliers, who were holding the "chalk pit salient" south of Hulluch, were gassed. Immediately the poisonous cloud was seen, the Irishmen donned their gas helmets, and prepared to repel the infantry attack which they knew would soon follow. About two hours later they were gassed again, and their trenches were furiously bombarded. Then came the attack. The Germans expected to find the Irishmen either rendered powerless by panic, or so much in sympathy with their fellow-countrymen in Dublin that they would surrender freely. They never made

a greater mistake. The Inniskillings and Dublin Fusiliers were unshaken alike in loyalty and courage. They hurled back the enemy with the utmost determination, and only a few of the assailants escaped.

During May the great struggle at Verdun was in full swing, and all eyes were directed to the wedge of highlands between the Meuse and the Woëvre. On May Day came the distressing news of the fall of Kut, and on the same day unsuccessful gas attacks were made upon our lines north of Loos and north of Messines. On the 2nd other German assaults were stopped by artillery fire. On the 9th it was announced that the Anzacs had arrived at the front. On the night of the 15th there was desperate fighting on the edge of the crest of Vimy Ridge, where the enemy had seized and fortified a series of mine craters, forming a rough crescent. After a bombardment we exploded mines under and against these craters, and immediately the Loyal North Lancashires were sent forward to seize the new craters formed by the explosions. A fierce bomb struggle took place ; but within an hour the whole position was firmly in our hands, and before morning the crater-groups had been fortified and machine guns had been mounted. As usual, many fine deeds of heroism were done by our men.

On the 21st the Germans won a distinct success. They carried 500 yards of our trenches at the north end of the Vimy Ridge, and penetrated our lines for a distance of from 100 to 300 yards. On 2nd June, when the lying news of a great naval victory was being circulated throughout Germany, the enemy began a determined attack upon our lines on the Ypres salient. The series of fights that followed developed into the biggest engagement on the British front since Loos, and it fully deserves the name of the Third Battle of Ypres. I shall tell you the story of this battle in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES.

ONCE more the Ypres salient, the scene of so many fierce and costly struggles, comes into prominence. On page 315 you will see a map of the salient, showing our lines as they were on the morning of June 2, 1916. Run your finger along the trench line from the village of Hooge, on the Ypres-Menin road, to that mound of death known as Hill 60, close by the Ypres-Comines railway. On 2nd June this portion of the line was held by 20,000 Canadian troops, which included units of Princess Patricia's Light Infantry, the Canadian Mounted Rifles, the Royal Canadian Regiment, and the Canadian Infantry. The northern end of the line was held by the Patricias. To the south were the Canadian Mounted Rifles. Once again Ypres and Canada were to be linked in battle renown.

It was a clear, quiet morning, very suitable for observation, and Generals Mercer and Williams of the 3rd Canadian Division had gone into the front-line trenches to take stock of the situation. Suddenly, at ten minutes to nine o'clock, without any warning, a terrible cannonade began. Along 3,000 yards of our front, from slightly south of Hooge to the north of Hill 60, torrents of German shells began to fall. The generals at once took refuge in a well-protected dug-out, known as "The Tube." They were there when the Germans arrived. At the end of the day General Mercer was dead, and General Williams was wounded and a prisoner.

No one on the British side seems to have had the slightest notion that the Germans were about to make a great assault upon our lines. Soon, however, it was clear that the attack had been long prepared. Every kind of gun was used—5.9

Canadians at Close Quarters with the Germans:

(From the picture by R. Caton Woodville.

"The Canadian troops," wrote Mr. Philip Gibbs, the war correspondent, "charged at two o'clock Sanctuary Wood to Mount Sorel, a distance of about a mile, including Armagh Wood, Observatory Hill, cess. . . . The men advanced in open order, and worked downwards and southwards into their old a man, just as Colonel Shaw had died on 2nd June with the party of eighty men whom he had rallied. men surrendered."

Recapture of Positions near Sanctuary Wood.

By permission of The Illustrated London News.)

in the morning (13th June). Their attack was directed to the part of the line from the southern end of and Mount Sorel itself—most important because of the high ground. The attack was a complete suc- positions. In one place of attack about forty Germans, who fought desperately, were killed almost to It was one shambles for another, and the Germans were not less brave, it seems. One officer and 113

guns, naval guns (" Silent Lizzies," as our men dubbed them), heavy howitzers, and trench mortars. For four long hours the storm of fire never ceased. Nothing so terrible had been experienced before.

Glance again at the map, and notice what a big bulge there was in our lines between Hooge and Hill 60. The distance from one place to the other, as the aeroplane flies, is little more than a mile and a half. You can easily see that the Germans could fire upon this bulge from the south, the east, and the north. They could not only utterly destroy our trenches, but could fling such a barrier of bursting shells behind them that it seemed impossible that any man could pass through it and remain unwounded. Nevertheless certain battalions braved that storm of death, and, what is more, won through.

For four awful hours the shells burst in and around the Canadian trenches. There is nothing so trying to the nerves as fierce artillery fire, and many a brave man has felt his courage ooze away under such a strain. The Canadians, however, never wavered. They endured the awful blast, though they were powerless to make a reply. In Sanctuary Wood, which was held by the Patricias, the fire was intense, and soon the " wood " consisted only of ragged stumps and splintered boles. The fire was even worse farther south, where the Canadian Mounted Rifles were holding shallow trenches out on the flat. They could only dig down a few feet below the surface. If they went down any further, water oozed up from the spongy soil, and turned the trenches into flooded drains. Behind the Canadian Mounted Rifles were the positions known as Maple Copse, Observatory Ridge, and Armagh Wood. Each of these names will be writ large in history.

You cannot possibly form any idea of the awful nature of the artillery fire that burst upon the Canadian trenches on that June morning. Some of you who live in Great Britain have seen, or at least have heard, the explosion of a Zeppelin bomb, and no doubt you found it terrifying enough. But if you are to picture the artillery fire which the Canadians endured, you must imagine Zeppelin bombs dropping by scores every minute over every acre of the area under attack, and not ceasing for hours at a time. It is said that in some places shells fell at the rate of eighty-seven a minute. Before long huge holes appeared in the ground, and it resembled a picture

of the surface of the moon as seen through a powerful telescope.

When, at ten minutes to one, the bombardment ceased, the Germans imagined that the men holding the trenches had been utterly blotted out. They supposed that they had merely to advance and occupy ground on which there was no living man to oppose them. Forthwith from the opposite trenches sprang a swarm of gray-coated Huns. In some places they had only to push forward and occupy what had once been trenches. But in other places the Canadians had taken refuge in their dug-outs while the storm was raging, and as soon as it ceased they manned the broken parapets once more. This occurred in at least two places—in Sanctuary Wood and Maple Copse. When the Germans advanced towards these positions they were met by a fierce rifle and machine-gun fire, and were mown down remorselessly.

Map of Ypres Salient.

Let me tell you what happened at Maple Copse. C Company of a certain battalion held a position which was so heavily bombarded that the reserves felt sure that every man in it had been blown to pieces or buried alive. No shots came from the position, and the Germans thought it was without a single defender. On they came, as carelessly as if they were out for a stroll. When, however, they were fifty yards away from the position, a volley burst upon them, and it was so well directed that those who were unwounded turned and fled. A second time they advanced, but a second time they were driven back. Then their big guns got to work again, and battered the position once more, while thousands of rifles were turned against it. Nevertheless, when night fell the Canadians were still there, determined to hold the ground to the last man.

Elsewhere it was impossible to hold on to the mounds of debris that once were trenches. To add to the horror, mines

were exploded which caused still further wreckage. On the edge of one of the craters were seen the bodies of a stalwart sergeant-major of the Mounted Rifles and two privates of the Patricias. Lying around them and beneath them were twelve Germans whom they had killed with the bayonet.

In some places the Germans advanced under cover of dense smoke, and so were not visible to the thin khaki line of dazed and shaken defenders until they were close at hand. In one trench, where most of the rifles were unfit for use, the men climbed out and charged into the enemy with no other weapons than broken rifle-butts, entrenching tools, and fists. They charged magnificently, but they charged to their death.

The Germans declared that they took few prisoners because the Canadians ran away. Never was a fouler lie told. They took few prisoners because the Canadians preferred death to dishonour. They fought to the last with clubs and bare hands against guns, rifles, and bombs. In one place Colonel A. E. Shaw rallied eighty Mounted Rifles amidst a jumble of ruined earthworks, and there the Canadians fought until only a handful remained. Of these, only two managed to reach safety.

In another place a captain ordered his pitiful remnant of men to retire, but they refused, and had almost to be driven to the rear. He himself stayed until the last man had gone, and his comrades, looking back, saw him empty his revolver at the advancing Germans, then fling it in their faces, and leap after it to certain death. Innumerable gallant deeds were done on that dread day. During the bombardment a private from Kamsac, Saskatchewan, busied himself in bandaging the wounded, and in getting them under the cover of a battered sandbag breastwork. When his company was ordered to retire, he refused to fall back with them. He stayed on with his wounded, one of whom was a fellow-townsman and an old friend.

Such was the opening of the Third Battle of Ypres. By 3rd June, despite the counter-attacks which had been most gallantly made by the Canadians on the previous day, the enemy remained in possession of a large part of our line from just south of Hooge to the north of Hill 60. Four days later the Germans attacked our positions north of Hooge, and on 8th June our front line ran behind this much-fought-for village. The outermost angle of the salient was in the hands

of the Germans. They exhibited a placard on one of their parapets :—

"ENGLISCH—TAKE WARNUNG BY
KITCHENER'S FATE.
GERMANY IS INVINCIBLE."

A few days later the Canadians made the boast look foolish. Very early on the morning of Tuesday, the 13th, they attacked again. At 1.30, after an artillery preparation, they advanced in four waves.

"When we got going," wrote an officer, "we went through the Germans like a knife through cheese. They didn't know what to do with us but throw down their rifles and bolt, or hold up their hands. They said we ran. You should have seen them skedoodle for home and ma—those who didn't throw themselves on the ground and beg to be taken prisoners. We went clean to the old line, and captured some hundreds of prisoners. Our artillery had kept them from doing much in the digging-in line, and so we had a chance to slam them good and plenty. And you bet we did."

Thus the Canadians recaptured most of their lost positions. They won back more than 1,500 yards of the old line. Heavy losses were inflicted on the enemy, and many prisoners were taken. The Canadians had saved the salient once more.

* * * * * * *

No further incident worth recording took place on the British front during the remaining days of June. The struggle had died down at Verdun, and the Germans no longer looked for success in that quarter. Their newspapers were asking, "When is the English offensive coming?" It was coming rapidly enough. For months we had been preparing for a combined assault along with the French on the chalk downs and woods between the Ancre and the Somme. We were now ready to make the long-expected "Big Push." At half-past seven on the morning of Saturday, 1st July, the great Battle of the Somme began with an appalling and long-continued gun-fire that testified to the successful labours of our munition workers at home. The story of this great and successful forward movement will be told in our next volume.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HEROES OF THE VICTORIA CROSS.—I.

IN former chapters of this book I have been able to give you accounts of the heroes of the Victoria Cross in connection with the engagements in which they performed their valorous deeds. I am not able to do this in the present chapter, for at the end of March 1916 the War Office gave notice that thenceforward the times and places at which Victoria Crosses had been won would not be stated in the official accounts. Probably this course was adopted in order to prevent the Germans from learning through our newspapers what units were opposed to them at certain times in various parts of our line.

Between 31st March and 22nd June ten heroes were awarded the Victoria Cross. I have already given you an account of one of them—Private William Young, of the 8th East Lancashires.* In this chapter I will recount the exploits of the other nine.

CAPTAIN ARTHUR FORBES GORDON KILBY, 2nd Battalion, the South Staffordshire Regiment.

Somewhere on the British front a strong enemy redoubt was to be attacked. Captain Kilby, who had on many former occasions shown great gallantry, begged to be allowed to lead his company against the position. At the head of his men he advanced along a narrow tow-path; and, though wounded at the outset, pushed on right up to the enemy's wire, in spite of terrible machine-gun fire and a heavy shower of bombs. When he reached the wire he fell with his foot blown off. Nevertheless, he continued to cheer on his men and to fire on the enemy. When the attack was over Captain Kilby was reported missing. In all probability he was numbered with the dead.

* See Vol. IV., p. 374.

Lieutenant Eric Archibald M'Nair, 9th (Service) Battalion, the Royal Sussex Regiment.

A mine was suddenly exploded by the enemy under our trenches, and Lieutenant M'Nair and many men of his platoon were hoisted into the air. Some of the men were buried, but Lieutenant M'Nair, though much shaken, was unhurt. At once he organized a party with a machine gun, and manned the near edge of the crater. The Huns advanced ; but the lieutenant's little band kept up such a rapid fire that many of the enemy were shot down, and the rest were driven off. Knowing that another attack would soon be launched, Lieutenant M'Nair ran back for reinforcements, and sent men to another unit to bring up bombs, ammunition, and tools to replace those which had been buried. As the communication trench was blocked by the explosion, he had to cross the open under heavy fire. Finally, he returned, again across the open, at the head of reinforcements, and thus by his prompt and plucky action and example enabled the position to be held.

Sergeant Arthur Frederick Saunders, 9th (Service) Battalion, the Suffolk Regiment.

During an attack in which his officer was shot down, Sergeant Saunders took charge of two machine guns and a few men, and although severely wounded in the thigh, closely followed the last four charges of another battalion, and rendered it every possible support. Later, when the remains of this battalion had been forced to retire, he stuck to one of his guns, and by his clear orders and continuous firing did much to cover the retirement.

Acting Corporal William Richard Cotter, 6th Battalion, East Kent Regiment.

Corporal Cotter, whose father and mother lived at Sandgate, was the eldest of six sons, five of whom had served the King, and two of whom had made the great sacrifice. He had been in the army fourteen years when he showed that conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty which won him the highest award of valour. In the previous December he had been recommended for the Distinguished Service Medal. After the explosion of an enemy mine, which blew off his right leg at the knee and wounded him in both arms, Corporal Cotter managed to make his way unaided for fifty yards to the crater. There, in spite of his terrible sufferings, he took charge of the

men holding it, steadied them, controlled their fire, and arrayed them anew to meet a fresh counter-attack by the enemy. For two hours he continued at this work, and only allowed his wounds to be roughly dressed when the attack had quieted down. He could not be moved back for fourteen hours; but, during all this time of suffering, he had a cheery word for every man who passed him. There is no doubt that his magnificent courage helped greatly to save a very dangerous situation. About a fortnight later he died in hospital. The chaplain of his regiment said that his last thoughts were with his comrades, and that his parting words were, "Good-bye; God bless them all."

Private Henry Kenny, 1st Battalion, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.

In one day Private Kenny went out of his trench into the open six different times, and, undeterred by very heavy shell, rifle, and machine-gun fire, carried six wounded comrades into safety. He was himself hit in the neck while he was getting the last man over the parapet.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

HEROES OF THE VICTORIA CROSS.—II.

YOU are now to learn how a chaplain won the Victoria Cross. He was the first of his cloth to receive the high honour in this war, and the second to win the distinction since its institution in 1856.

The Rev. Noel Mellish, V.C.

REV. EDWARD NOEL MELLISH, Temporary Chaplain to the Forces.

On 24th April, "somewhere in France," a composite battalion made up of men from every unit in a particular division formed a hollow square, enclosing in its centre the general and his staff. A crowd of spectators attended, some of them French villagers—women, very old men, and children. Twenty-two men were called out, one by one; the story of their heroisms was recited, and the general pinned on their tunics the ribbons of the various decorations which they had won. The last to be decorated was the Rev. Edward Noel Mellish, a "very gallant gentleman," as the general rightly called him.

From his earliest years Mr. Mellish loved soldiers and soldiering. He was only seventeen when the Boer War broke out, and as soon as he was old enough he went to South Africa and enlisted in Baden-Powell's Police. He proved himself so good a soldier that he would have been granted a commission had he desired it. But his belief was that the army was not a man's job in time of peace. Accordingly he obtained a post in a diamond mine at Jagersfontein, where he was brought into contact with all sorts and conditions of men, and speedily won their confidence. So strong and good was his influence, that a clergyman induced him to give up business and go home to study for the Church. In due time he was ordained and became curate of the poor Thames-side parish of St. Paul's, where he established a Church Lads' Brigade, of which he was captain. His boys idolized him. He was six feet in height, tall and strong, and he taught his young admirers how to obey, how to behave, and how to "play the game."

When the war broke out he could not resist the call. He obtained an appointment as chaplain, and was at first attached to a military hospital at Rouen. It was a happy day for him when he was sent to the front at St. Eloi.

An officer of the Northumberland Fusiliers thus describes how Mr. Mellish won the V.C. :—

"Nothing could be finer than the way Chaplain Mellish did his duty, and more than his duty, during the time he was stationed near us. The conditions on the day on which he won his Cross were very trying. Immediately the troops occupied the captured trenches, and while the wounded men were picking their way back painfully, the enemy guns were turned on full blast, and the intervening ground was deluged with shell fire and machine-gun bullets, not to mention shells, and grenades that came from a portion of trench still in enemy hands. Into this tempest of fire the brave parson walked with a Prayer Book under his arm, as though he were going to a church parade in peace time. He reached the first batch of wounded, and knelt down to do what he could for them. The first few men he brought in himself, without any aid, and it made us think a bit more of parsons to see how he walked quietly under fire, assisting the slowly-moving wounded, and thinking more of saving them from discomfort than of himself. It was only when the ambulance parties were able to get out

A Fight in a German Dug-out.

(From the picture by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.)

This picture tells a story of German treachery. While engaged in clearing out dug-outs a British officer stood at the entrance of one of them and called upon the occupants to surrender. They declared that they could not come out because they were wounded. The officer, therefore, entered the dug-out, and in a moment was struck down with a death wound. You may be sure that in a few minutes his men had avenged his death.

during a lull in the fighting that he took a rest. Next day he was out on the job as unconcerned as ever, and some men of my regiment had reason to be grateful for his attention to them at critical moments. Some of them would never have survived had it not been for the prompt assistance rendered by Mr. Mellish."

Such was the man who stood in the middle of the sunlit square on that April day, when gallant soldiers received their meed of valour. When a thousand of his comrades broke into loud and admiring cheers in his honour, he blushed till he almost matched the new bit of crimson on his breast. Modesty was ever the virtue of the truly brave.

Lance Naik Lala, 41st Dogras, Indian Army.

Again an Indian soldier appears in the bead-roll of lofty heroism. Lance Naik Lala, finding a British officer of another regiment lying close to the enemy, dragged him into a temporary shelter which he had made, and in which he had already bandaged four wounded men. After making the officer comfortable he heard calls from the adjutant of his own regiment, who was lying in the open severely wounded. At the time the Germans were not a hundred yards away, and it seemed certain death to go to the rescue of the stricken man. Nevertheless Lance Naik Lala insisted on going out to his wounded adjutant. He wished to take the adjutant on his back and crawl in with him ; but as he was not permitted to do this, he stripped off his own clothing to keep the officer warm and stayed with him till just before dark, when he returned to his shelter. Then he carried the first wounded officer back to the main trenches, and returning with a stretcher, brought in his adjutant. Never was the Victoria Cross more gallantly won.

Captain John Alexander Sinton, M.B., Indian Medical Service.

During this war the doctors have covered themselves with glory. Over and over again they have tended the wounded under a storm of shot and shell, and many of them have been stricken down in the midst of their merciful labours. In these pages you have read of several doctor heroes. Captain Sinton was a very distinguished member of this gallant band. Although he was shot through both arms and through the side, he refused to go to hospital, and remained as long as daylight lasted attending to the wounded under very heavy fire. In

three previous actions he had displayed similar bravery and devotion.

SEPOY CHATTA SINGH, 9th Bhopal Infantry, Indian Army.

In reading the stories of those Indian soldiers who won the Victoria Cross, you must have been struck by their self-sacrificing efforts to rescue the wounded. Sepoy Chatta Singh won the highest award of valour by going out to assist his commanding officer, who lay helpless in the open. He bound up his officer's wound, and then dug cover for him with his entrenching tool, and all the time was exposed to a very heavy rifle fire. For five hours, until the darkness fell, he remained beside the wounded officer, shielding him with his own body. Then when night shrouded the battlefield he went back for assistance and brought his charge into safety.

Once more let me remind you that the men whose exploits have been recounted in this and the former chapter were not a tithe of the heroes who deserved, and in some cases received, recognition for deeds of outstanding courage during the first six months of the year 1916. Many other soldiers received the Military Cross, the Distinguished Service Order, the Distinguished Conduct Medal, and the Military Medal. I could fill these pages with the record of their gallantry. Do not assume that great deeds of daring and self-sacrifice are only done by the winners of the Victoria Cross. Every battalion, nay, every company, in the British army, glories in its roll of heroes, all of whom, whether they received recognition or not, were worthy of a place on the highest roll of fame.

"Well done for them; and, fair isle, well for thee!
While that thy bosom beareth sons like those,
The little gem set in the silver sea
Shall never fear her foes!"

CHAPTER XL.

WHY ITALY DECLARED WAR ON AUSTRIA.

IN chapter xli. of Volume IV. I made a passing reference to the Italian campaign, which began on May 25, 1915. I must now describe more fully Italy's part in the war. Before I do so, let me remind you that when the Central Powers flung down the gauntlet to France and Russia, Italy was their partner in what is known as the Triple Alliance. You will be interested to learn how Italy came to join this unholy combination, and how she broke away from it and threw in her lot with the Allies.

Down to the year 1878 Italy was more in sympathy with France and Britain than with the Central Powers. She had the same ideas of liberty and progress, and was grateful to Britain for helping her to secure her freedom. But in 1881 she suffered a great disappointment. She had long regarded Tunis as a country which she had the right to govern, for more than fifty thousand Italians had settled in that North African land. In 1881, however, France, with the sanction of Great Britain, occupied Tunis, and Italy naturally felt much aggrieved.

The Italians thought that France and Britain had been unjust, and that they would stand a much better chance of securing their rights if they joined Germany and Austria. On May 20, 1882, the Italian Government signed a treaty with these Powers, and the Triple Alliance came into being. It was renewed in 1887, in 1891, and again in 1912.

In 1915, for the first time, we learned something of the terms of this Treaty of Alliance. The most important article was to this effect: If one or more of the Great Powers, *without being directly provoked*, should attack one or two of the parties

to the treaty, and war should result, then Germany, Austria, and Italy would make common cause against the attackers. If, however, one Great Power should threaten the security of one of the parties to the treaty, and war should result, then the other two parties undertook to remain neutral and friendly. If they thought fit to join in the war, they could, of course, do so.

Though Italy had made a treaty of friendship with Austria, you must not suppose that there was any love lost between the two countries. Italians and Austrians have been bitter enemies for many a long day. There is a historic reason for this hatred. When Napoleon was rising to power there were many small states in Italy, each ruled by its own king. Napoleon swept these petty kingdoms away, and set up republics in their stead. After his downfall in 1815 the Congress of European Powers met at Vienna and put Italy under the heel of Austria. The old petty kingdoms were restored ; the heirs of the tyrants who had formerly ruled them were placed on their thrones, and were backed up by Austrian armies. Worst of all, the Congress handed over to Austria the provinces of Lombardy and Venetia in North Italy, together with the long strip of coastline which runs round the head of the Adriatic Sea and along its eastern shores.

The history of Italy between 1815 and 1871 is the story of how, by means of uprisings of the people, the states of Italy became united and the Italian nation arose. Throughout all these struggles for unity and freedom Austria was *the* enemy. Her armies again and again destroyed the hopes of the Italians. So fiercely was she hated that the national watchword became " Death to the Austrians ! " It is only within the lifetime of living men that Austria has been forced to yield Lombardy and Venetia to Italy. Right down to the year 1866, when Prussia defeated Austria in what is known as the Seven Weeks' War, the Austrian flag waved over the domes and towers and canals of Venice. When Austria, as you will soon learn, was made to disgorge Venice, she still retained a good deal of territory that properly belonged to Italy. This territory is called by the Italians " Unredeemed Italy," and for many years they have longed to restore it to their native land.

Now that you understand why the Italians cherish a deep-rooted hatred for the Austrians, let me tell you how it came

The Meeting of Garibaldi and King Victor Emmanuel II.

(*From the fresco by Pietro Aldi in the Rathhaus at Siena.*)

Garibaldi was the leader of irregular bands of patriots who were determined to drive out of Italy the foreigners and their puppet kings, and set up one kingdom in which all men should be free under what is called a constitutional ruler. Victor Emmanuel II., King of Sardinia (Savoy), was a fair-minded king, who admitted his subjects to a large share in the government of their own country. His kingdom became the nucleus of United Italy, and in 1861 he became King of Italy. This picture shows you the meeting of the two men who were chiefly instrumental in bringing about the unity of Italy.

about that the Austrians were forced to give up Venice. The Seven Weeks' War, you will remember, was brought about by a quarrel between Prussia and Austria as to the future government of the two provinces which had been stolen from Denmark. As soon as war broke out Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy, made an alliance with the King of Prussia. One of the conditions of this alliance was that no peace should be made with Austria until she had given up Venetia to Italy. When peace was made, Venetia was restored to the Italians. They also begged for "Unredeemed Italy." "Give us the Trentino," they cried; but Prussia would not do so. "Let us, at least, have Trieste," they implored; but Bismarck angrily refused. "Trieste is for Germany," he declared. Austria was to be allowed to keep the great Italian port in pledge for Prussia, till Prussia was ready to plant her own mailed foot upon the shores of the Mediterranean.*

Prussia, according to her wont, played false with Italy. Though she made Austria give up Venetia, she arranged the boundary line between Italy and Austria in such a way that all the advantages were on the side of Austria. The frontier which Austria was allowed to fortify was worth three victorious campaigns to her. A writer † has thus described it. He viewed a wide stretch of it from a point high up above the plain of the Veneto.

"At our feet and all about us the level country lay glistening in the sunshine, with the white towers and red roofs of the towns thrusting themselves like islands out of that sea of green and gold. But if your gaze travelled across the plain, north, or east, or west, it was arrested by the mountain masses billowing skyward in range beyond range, banks of gray and purple in the foreground, great black walls and ridges farther back, with gleams of silver flashing from snow peaks among the clouds of the horizon. On that bastion, everywhere on its higher ramparts, Austria has sat in her armour, guarded and secure herself, always ready to surge down through the gates and passes and river valleys upon the hill country and lower slopes of Italy, and then into the rich cities and fertile fields of Lombardy and Venetia. The barrier for part of its length, in the great salient of the Trentino and on the steep and stony cliffs along the Isonzo, has Italian soil and Italian peoples behind it, the unredeemed Italy that gives the motive for this war. But to reach the promised land, Italy has to fight her way up the mountains, and throw out the alien garrison encamped upon their upper levels."

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* See Vol. I., pp. 84–85.

† Sidney Low, in the *Fortnightly Review* (Sept. 1916).

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From 1908 onwards the Italians found the Triple Alliance more and more distasteful. One of the articles in the treaty pledged the parties not to attempt to win influence and territories in the Balkans without first coming to an agreement with each other. Nevertheless, Austria annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in various other ways the interests of Italy were sacrificed. When the Great War broke out the Triple Alliance was on a very shaky foundation indeed.

When Austria-Hungary sent her infamous Note to Serbia, and seemed bent on overwhelming that little country, Italy strove in every way for peace. She backed up Sir Edward Grey's proposals for a conference, and plainly told Austria that if she moved against Belgrade she would be breaking an important article in the treaty. Further, she made it very clear that if Austria, as a result of her high-handed action, should find herself at war with Russia, Italy would not help her. Such a war would be provoked by Austria, and by the terms of the treaty Italy was free to stand out of the quarrel.

Such was Italy's attitude at the beginning of the war. On 4th August she declared herself neutral. As a matter of fact, her army had been neglected, and she was then quite incapable of taking the field, even if she had wished to do so. In any case she was forced to wait and prepare.

Before long the Italians saw that the time had arrived when they might make a bold bid for "Unredeemed Italy." "Trent and Trieste!" was rapidly becoming a popular cry. Before the end of the year 1914 the Austrian and Italian Governments were discussing the question, and by the middle of February 1915 the Italian Government warned Austria that if either Serbia or Montenegro were attacked without previous agreement, grave consequences would follow. This threat was sufficient to cause Austria to draw back for a time, and meanwhile Germany tried to persuade her to give up to the Italians some of "Unredeemed Italy," and to pay them a sum of money in order to keep them out of the war. On 8th April Italy formally demanded the Trentino, a better frontier, Trieste and the neighbourhood (which were to form a new self-governing state), together with some islands off the coast of Dalmatia. Austria was also to recognize Italy as sovereign power in Albania. If Austria would consent to these terms Italy pledged

herself to remain neutral, and to pay Austria a large sum of money for the loss of Government property in the territories which should be given up to her. Then began long discussions between the two Governments, and meanwhile popular feeling in favour of the Allies was rising in Italy. On 28th March it was rumoured that Austria and Italy had come to an agreement. But rumour was a lying jade, for when in May the Austrian terms were printed and circulated, they fell so far short of the Italian demands that there was great anger throughout the country. There were, however, some Italians, including the leader of the opposition, who were quite ready to fall in with them and thus avoid war. The Prime Minister, Signor Salandra, however, would have none of them; and as the leader of the opposition had a majority in both Houses of Parliament, he sent his resignation to the King.

General Count Luigi Cadorna, Commander-in-Chief of the Italian Armies in the Field.
(*Drawn by F. Matania.*)

Then it was that the Italian people showed very clearly that their sympathies were with the Allies, and that they were eager for a war with Austria. A great orator appeared in Rome and roused the people to the highest pitch of enthusiasm. He called on the name of Garibaldi, the great liberator, and declared that if he could return to them he would brand them as traitors and cowards if they disarmed Italy and thrust her again into slavery. The King refused to accept the Prime Minister's resignation, and his people received the news with great joy. A procession a mile long marched to the King's palace in Rome, amidst wildly cheering crowds, and when Parliament met the Prime Minister found himself strongly supported. The people had spoken, and their voice was all-

Italian Soldiers at Garibaldi's Monument. [*By permission of The Sphere.*

A military demonstration in Rome on the eve of the declaration of war. The soldiers swarming on the base of the monument are Bersaglieri.

powerful. On 22nd May mobilization was ordered, and next day war was declared against Austria. Never was a war more popular. Almost the whole nation was determined that the sacred soil so long in the hands of their hated enemies should be freed at last.

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Before I conclude this chapter, let me tell you something of the army and navy with which Italy was about to challenge the might of Austria, and Germany too. Service in the army was compulsory ; it began at the age of twenty, and lasted for nineteen years. Recruits were divided into three classes—the first class formed the first line of the regular army ; the second class received a few months' annual training for eight years, and then passed into the Militia ; the third class was only called up for thirty days' training each year. In time of peace the strength of Italy's army was about 15,000 officers and 290,000 men. Her total war strength was about 2,000,000, of whom half were trained.

Her crack regiments were the Carabineri, the Bersaglieri, and the Alpini, all composed of picked men. No doubt you have seen pictures of the Bersaglieri, with their shiny black hats and drooping cocks' feathers. They are wonderful marchers, and at manœuvres have been known to cover forty miles in a day. The Alpini, who wear a gray felt hat with a high crown, a small brim turned up at the back and down at the front, and a black eagle's feather at the side, are perhaps the finest mountain troops in the world. We shall hear something of their exploits in the next chapter. Italian soldiers are not big, but they are tough, very hard working, always keen and cheerful, and there is a fine spirit of comradeship between officers and men. Italy's field artillery was armed with 75 mm. guns, and she had a large number of howitzer batteries and a heavy siege train.

The Commander-in-Chief was King Victor Emmanuel III., a gallant, simple, and straightforward monarch, much loved and trusted by his people. He was the third king of United Italy, the first being Victor Emmanuel II., King of Sardinia, who was declared king on March 17, 1861. Humbert I., the father of Emmanuel III., was assassinated by an anarchist in July 1900. You will be interested to know that in 1896 Emmanuel married Princess Hélène, daughter of Nicholas, King of Montenegro.

The Generalissimo was Count Luigi Cadorna, a man of sixty-five, and the son of the man who led the Italian army with great gallantry in 1870. As a young man, General Cadorna had served on his father's staff, and had since won fame throughout Europe as a writer on military science. No man in Italy knew the frontier on which the war was to be waged better than he. Every mountain, valley, and ravine was as familiar to him as the bogs and lakes of East Prussia were to von Hindenburg.

A few words must be added about Italy's navy. It contained four Dreadnoughts and two others almost ready for sea, all armed with 12-inch guns. In addition, there were ten pre-Dreadnought battleships and a number of older vessels. Three of the cruisers were very fast, though none of the armoured cruisers could steam more than twenty-two knots an hour. The light craft included twenty submarines, a large number of torpedo boats, and forty destroyers. With this naval force Italy was greatly superior to Austria-Hungary. She took over from France the task of holding the enemy in the Adriatic Sea.

The Admiral-in-Chief was the Duke of the Abruzzi, first cousin of the King. He was a man of forty-two, who had won renown as an explorer, a mountaineer, and a geographer. He had led scientific expeditions to the Arctic wastes of Alaska, to the vast peaks of the Himalayas, and to the thick jungles of Ruwenzori.* During the Tripoli War † he had skilfully commanded a division of the Italian fleet.

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With these forces Italy was now about to undertake a terribly difficult task. She was to try to force her way across lofty, snow-clad mountains, on which the Austrians had erected strong fortresses commanding every possible path. In the next chapter I shall give you some idea of the character of the frontier, and then you will understand what vast obstacles beset the Italian army.

Italy, however, began the war with two important advantages.

* Mountain of Central Africa, the eastern half of which lies between Albert Nyanza and Edward Nyanza. It was explored by the Duke of the Abruzzi in 1906. Some of the peaks are between 15,000 and 17,000 feet in height, and are snow clad.

† Fought against Arabs and Turks in 1911–12. After a very difficult campaign peace was signed, giving sovereign rights over the country to Italy.

In the first place, both her army and her navy had seen recent war service. During the previous fifteen years her soldiers had fought on the Red Sea coast and in Tripoli, and her sailors had gained much experience in transporting and convoying armies, and in bombardments and blockades. In the second place, she did not take the field until more than nine months after the first shots were fired in Flanders. All through the winter she had been busy equipping and training her soldiers, and gaining experience from the operations in East and West. Her generals had clearly understood the value of heavy artillery and many machine guns, and they had studied trench warfare in all its phases. Onlookers, they say, see most of the game. The Italian generals had watched the great war game very closely, and they had laid to heart the lessons which the combatants had only learnt at a terrible cost of men and material.

The Serbian Boys adopted by "The Children's Story of the War." [*Photo, Balmain.*

Standing (left to right)—Djordje Alexitch, Milivoye Stefanovitch, Milorad Maletitch, Dmitrije Dulkanovitch, Peter Pantelitch.
Sitting (left to right)—Miodrag Martitch, Mihailo Radovanovitch, Djordje Osmanbegovitch, Stanko Ilitch, Nikola Vasitch.

All these boys followed the retreat of the Serbian army during the last three months of 1915. Several of the bigger boys fought as soldiers. On the voyage from Albania to Corfu the Italian ship which conveyed a number of refugees, including two of the small boys in the above group, was captured by an Austrian submarine. The boys are scholars of George Heriot's School, Edinburgh.

CHAPTER XLI.

WAR IN THE MOUNTAINS.

BEFORE we can follow the Italian campaign intelligently we must spend a few minutes in studying the map on page 338. The thick black line which is traced upon it marks the frontier between Austria and Italy. Those who made this frontier had one great object in view—namely, to put the Austrians in such a favourable position that they could swoop down upon Italy whenever they wished to do so. They prisoned Italy behind mountain walls, and they gave to Austria every pass by which guns could cross the rocky barrier. All along the frontier, at every gateway in the mountain wall, you will see Austrian fortresses. Nowhere in the world is there a more formidable frontier.

Run your finger along it. You see that its shape is that of an irregular S lying on its side, thus ∽. You notice that the western loop of the S is much narrower than the eastern loop. It is to the western loop that I wish you to pay special attention now. In chapter xli. of our fourth volume I told you that when Italy joined in the war she set herself to conquer the Trentino, which is inhabited mainly by Italian-speaking people, and is part of what is known as "Unredeemed Italy." The Trentino is contained within the western loop of the S. It is a great broken headland of mountain jutting into the plains, and its rim is formed by lofty ranges which are only pierced by a few river valleys and passes, all of them difficult. The great river of this region is the Adige. It rises high up in the Alps, sweeps eastwards, turns south past the city of Trent, and breaks through the southern rim of mountains to the east of the Lake of Garda. It then meanders across the plain to join the Po at Verona. Your map shows you a very important railway

Map showing the Austro-Italian Boundary.

following the course of this river from Austria into Italy. A road also follows the river, and at Bozen meets a highway which gives a route across the high Alps into Austria proper. You can see at a glance that by far the best road from the Trentino to the Italian plains runs along the valley of the Adige. Look at the group of black stars round Trent.* Each black star represents a fortress. Nowhere in the Trentino are the fortresses so thickly clustered together as around Trent. By means of these fortresses the Austrians blocked the northward road into Austria proper.

A little to the east of Trent there is a lake in which the river Brenta begins. This river breaks through the eastern rim of mountains, and then flows south to join the Po. A railway follows its course, but the road which runs alongside it is very difficult for an army to follow. Farther north there are several other passes, but the broken district of the Dolomites lies between them and Bozen. The only real break by which a modern army can advance through the rim of the Trentino mountains is the narrow gap through which the Adige finds its way to the plains.

Now follow the eastern loop of the S. For about one hundred miles this loop consists of a sheer rampart of almost unbroken mountain. About thirty miles east of Bozen a highroad has been constructed through the heart of the white limestone crags at a height of some five thousand feet; but in places it runs through a defile which is commanded by a hundred points from which an army on the march could be swept away. Most of the other passes are mere bridle paths; but one of them, just about where the loop begins to turn to the south, carries the railway from Venice to Vienna. Though this is the easiest of all the great routes across the frontier, it is so narrow and difficult that it could easily be held against an invader.

Now follow the frontier from the railway which I have just mentioned to the sea. Find Cividale. Your map shows you level ground extending from this town to the Gulf of Venice. "Ah!" you say, "here at last is a weak place in the armour-clad frontier of Austria. Between Cividale and the sea the Italians have a chance of pushing into Austrian territory." I must, however, remind you that our map is on a small scale, and that the country from Cividale to the sea is by no means

* See map, p. 352.

as easy as it looks. The whole distance is only about twenty miles, and this is far too small a front for the deployment of a great army. Further, behind the frontier there is the river Isonzo, and lining its eastern bank are many high hills. You can easily see that the line of the river forms in itself a very strong defensive position. A great force of guns ranged on the heights behind the stream would make the Isonzo front almost impregnable.

Now you begin to understand the tremendous difficulties which the Italians had to face when they proposed to invade Austria. The Austrians had every advantage of position ; but they had their weakness too. A modern army, as you know, depends mainly upon railways for moving and provisioning troops, bringing up guns, and supplying them with stores of shell. If you look at the Austrian railway system you will notice that it skirts the frontier from the shores of the Gulf of Venice right round to the pass by which the river Adige breaks through the mountains. But you will also notice that it has very few branch lines, because the hill-valleys make railway construction almost impossible. Between the railway line and the actual frontier all material has to be brought up by road through steep valleys and across high hills. The Italians, on the other hand, were well supplied with railways. In the eastern loop of the S you see railway lines crossing and recrossing, and forming a very complete system by which they could readily supply their troops on the frontier with stores, guns, and ammunition.

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You will probably ask, " Why did not the Austrians, as soon as Italy declared war, sweep down from the mountains along the valleys of the Adige and the Brenta, and through the passes of the Carnic and Julian Alps, and overrun the Italian plains ? " This was, of course, the right thing to do ; but Austria in May 1915 could not provide the men and guns for such an advance. She had her hands full in the East, where, as you know, Mackensen had begun the great drive which was to cause the Russians to retreat far into the recesses of their land. Austria was obliged, for some months to come, to stand on the defensive all along her Italian frontier. Almost immediately war was declared she blew up the bridges on the Adige, and in the eastern loop of the S abandoned all her territory west of the

Isonzo, thus clearly showing that she was going to stand fast and let the Italians butt their heads against the mountain walls and the river line that formed her strong bulwark of defence.

What was the Italian plan of campaign? General Cadorna had two objects in view. First and foremost, he wished to capture the great seaport of Trieste, which lies, as you will observe, about twenty miles as the aeroplane flies to the south-east of the Lower Isonzo. You must not imagine that once the river was crossed all would be plain sailing. Find the Austrian city of Gorizia, on the Isonzo. Before the war it was a delightful town of white churches, hilly streets, broad squares, and gardens of laurels, pines, and palms. The climate is so mild that it was known as "The Nice of Austria." Strangely enough, its special industry was the printing of Hebrew books for the East. Between Gorizia and Trieste stretches the great limestone plateau of the Carso. Before the Italians could reach Trieste they had to cross this great obstacle.

"It is a mass of wrinkled rock, with scrub and thick undergrowth in some of the gullies, but for the most part naked stone, its gaunt ribs and blank shoulders scourged and flayed by the relentless sun. Save for the lizards that bask and bake themselves on its furnace-like floors, it is lifeless, as it is waterless and treeless; no shrub or tuft of mountain moss, no bird, and scarcely an insect, can find nourishment in this burnt solitude. The Austrians had strengthened the forbidding fastness by elaborate works. The whole face was veined with galleries and covered ways, with dug-outs and caves and gun emplacements in the solid rock. . . . To besiege this place was like attempting to carry the Rock of Gibraltar."

Cadorna's second object was to watch and hold the whole northern border, lest the Austrians should sweep down to the plains, cut the railways behind the Isonzo front, and take him in the rear. Accordingly, he decided to attack the Trentino and all the passes along the eastern loop of the S. If he could push across the Dolomites by the highroad to the east of Bozen, he might reach and cut the railway by which the Austrians maintained themselves all along the frontier. The Austrians would then be prevented from operating in the Trentino.

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Though the Austrians intended to stand upon the defensive by land, they were quite ready to strike by sea. A squadron of two battleships, four cruisers, and some eighteen destroyers, supported by many aircraft, pushed out from Pola on 23rd

May, and early next morning attacked the Italian coastline from Brindisi to Venice. The object of this attack was to damage the railway which runs along the Adriatic shore, for the most part within range of the guns of warships off the coast. Railway and signal stations and bridges were destroyed, and some of the seaside towns suffered severely. Airmen flew over Venice and dropped bombs on the Arsenal, on the oil tanks, and on the balloon sheds. A wave of anger swept over the Allied and neutral countries when the news reached them that the lovely city of Venice, with its exquisite monuments of art and piety, had been attacked. All was over by 6 a.m. The Italian fleet had been surprised, and the raiding squadron had done its work unmolested.

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By the evening of 24th May Cadorna's Isonzo army had crossed the frontier, and its left was just under Monte Nero, which commands the railway running south to Gorizia ; while its extreme right was on the shores of the Gulf of Venice. It was a wet season, and the bridges over the flooded Isonzo had been blown up. While the Italians were bringing up reinforcements and making ready for an attack on Monte Nero,* Italian airmen were busy bombing the railway farther south, so as to cut off supplies and reinforcements from the Austrians on the river line. By the end of May the Italians had reached the Isonzo, but had not crossed it.

In the central section there was much scattered fighting, and the Italians captured several of the passes, one of them the pass already referred to, east of Bozen. On the 30th they were only fifteen miles as the crow flies from the Austrian railway junction at Franzenfeste ; but those fifteen miles included the highest peaks of the Dolomites, and the road—one of the finest in Europe—ran, as I have already told you, through a narrow defile which gave every advantage to the defenders.

The Trentino fighting also began on May 24th. On that day Italian detachments pushed forward to the frontier on both sides of the Lake of Garda and through the Tonale Pass, which you will find on the western rim, to the west of Trent. By the end of the month the Italians had closed in on the Trentino fortresses. So far their success, though small, had been con-

* See map on p. 347.

tinuous. They had secured their flanks. The enemy could no longer descend at will upon the plains.

You must remember that all the fighting which I have briefly described above was carried on amidst towering Alpine peaks, and sometimes above the snow-line. Roads had to be made; heavy guns had to be hauled up mountain sides; trenches had to be dug on the edges of ravines or amidst the everlasting ice and snow. To give you some idea of the character of this mountain warfare, I will briefly describe the assault on Monte Nero, which rises in a sheer cliff to a height of 9,000 feet above sea level. A picked company of Alpini was detailed for the assault, which was made on a dark, misty night.* "No boots" was the order, "and no knapsacks." Officers and men tied their boots by the laces to their belts behind. Some wore socks to protect their feet; others wrapped bandages round them. Only rifles, bayonets, and ammunition pouches were taken. In complete silence the men scaled the wall of rock by means of two great cracks, while a more numerous column ascended the steep rocky slopes farther south. The climbers, clinging like flies to the rock faces, were not discovered until they had almost reached the top of the precipice. While the Austrians hastened to repel this unlooked-for attack, the main body came up and overwhelmed them. Thus the summit was captured, six hundred Austrians were made prisoner, and the Italians secured a position from which they were able to work south towards Gorizia.

Many other mountain spurs were also captured in much the same way, and again and again the Alpini took the foe by surprise. Not only had they to storm these difficult positions, but to hold them against fierce counter-attacks. By this time the Austrians no longer trusted to the natural advantages of their positions, but girdled the rocky peaks, 6,000, 7,000, or even 8,000 feet above the level of the sea, with wire entanglements and pitfalls of every kind.

By the end of June both sides had settled down to trench warfare.

A writer who visited an Italian outpost on the summit of Monte Cristallo, which you will find south of Sexten,† tells us that in the mass of this mountain, up to heights of over eight thousand feet, in crannies in the rock, in steep gullies,

* See picture on p. 349.

† See map, p. 338.

Hauling a heavy Italian Mortar to its

(*From the picture by F. Matania.*

One of the main features of the Italian campaign was the excellence of the Italian infantry. Heavy a heavy mortar in the act of being dragged up the mountain side. You will observe that a track has

Position high up on the Mountains.

By permission of The Sphere.)

pieces were hauled above the snow-line in all sorts of ingenious ways. The above picture shows you been specially made so that the gun cannot run back when the strain on the ropes is eased.

and in chimneys of snow, the batteries were placed and hidden quite secure from the fire of the enemy.

"A company of men divided into two half-companies held, the one half the base of the precipitous rock upon a sward of high valley, the other the summit itself, perhaps 3,000 feet higher; and the communication from one to the other was a double wire swung through the air above the chasm, up and down which travelled shallow cradles of steel carrying men and food, munitions and instruments. Such a device alone made possible the establishment of these posts in such incredible places, and the perilous journey along the wire rope, swung from precipice to precipice and over intervening gulfs, was the only condition of their continued survival. The post itself clung to the extreme summit of the mountain, as a bird's nest clings to the cranny of rock in which it is built." *

The same writer tells us that by means of these cable-ways the Italians made secure the whole mountain buttress, and captured and closed all breaks in the Alpine wall.

"You find small posts of men that must have their food and water daily brought to them thus, slung by the wire; you find them crouched upon the little dip where a collar of deep snow between bare rocks marks some almost impossible passage of the hills that must yet be held. You see a gun of 6-inch or even of 8-inch emplaced where, had you been climbing for your pleasure, you would hardly have dared to pitch the smallest tent. You hear the story of how the piece was hoisted here by machinery first established upon the rock; of the blasting for emplacement; of the accidents after which it was finally emplaced, and of the ingenious thought which has allowed for a chance of recoil or displacement."

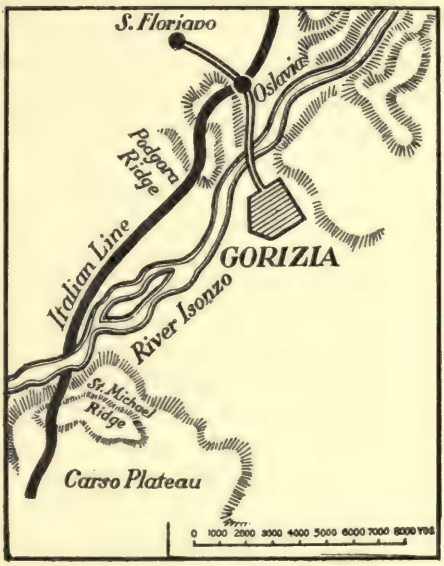
I need not follow in detail the fighting which went on amidst the mountains all through the summer, and, on the Isonzo, right down to the close of the year. In this section of the front the Italians were striving to capture Gorizia, the key to Trieste. Should it fall, Trieste could be turned from the north. Upon Gorizia, then, the chief interest of the campaign centred almost from the beginning.

Look carefully at the little map on the next page. On the northern edge of the Carso you see the ridge of St. Michael, about eight thousand yards to the south-east of Gorizia. On the eastern bank of the Isonzo, about three thousand yards from the same city, you notice the Podgora Ridge. If the Italians could capture the ridge of St. Michael and the ridge of Podgora, they would be in possession of observing stations which

* Hilaire Belloc in *Land and Water*.

would enable them to batter down Gorizia, and prevent the enemy from bringing up guns and reinforcements.

For months the Italians strove to capture the heights, and in November they managed to instal themselves on the slopes of the Podgora Ridge, and also to gain a footing on the ridge of St. Michael. In December they were for the first time able to turn their big guns upon Gorizia. Many infantry attacks were made, and in all of them the Italians showed wonderful courage and perseverance. Again and again they nearly broke through ; but at the end of the year Gorizia was still in the hands of the Austrians. Meanwhile in the Trentino the valley of the Adige had been secured as far as a few miles south of Rovereto, and the valley of the Brenta was in Italian possession as far up as a few miles west of Borgo. The road across the Dolomites was also locked, bolted, and barred against the Austrians.



Map of Isonzo Front.

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During the first months of 1916 there was a lull on the Italian front. Deep snow lay on the mountains, and in all the upper valleys white thick mists shrouded the lower ground. Though fighting was impossible, the lines high up on the mountains had to be strengthened and held in spite of Alpine storms, deep snow, and bitter cold. These were the real enemies of the Italians during the winter. I need not tell you that the men who held the mountain lines suffered great hardships. They were frost-bitten and buffeted by driving tempests, and frequently lacked food and fire. In many cases convoys of provisions, men, guns, and the trenches of friend and foe were swept away by avalanches.

All along the front the Italians laboured hard to preserve the positions which they had already won. On the Carso

they blasted out deep trenches and dug-outs, laid down water-pipes, and in a variety of ways prepared for the coming of the spring, when the war could be renewed in real earnest. Not until April was there any operation of importance. In the previous November the Alpini, under the command of Colonel "Peppino" Garibaldi,* grandson of the Liberator, had won a footing on the Col † di Lana after a desperate struggle. The Col di Lana stands a little to the south-west of Cortina, on the highroad which I have mentioned more than once in this chapter. It was the one favourable observation post of the enemy which the Italians had failed to secure. They had, as it were, shut all the doors of their house, but until Col di Lana was fully secured there was a window left to the Austrians by which they could look down into Italy. In April 1916 the Italians held the greater part of the col, but the Austrians were still on the summit.

For three months during the winter the Italians tunnelled under the peak, and laid a mine for the purpose of blowing the Austrians off the mountain. A fortnight before the mine was ready for exploding the Austrians began countermining. They fired their mine first, but with no real effect. On the night of 17th April the Italians touched off their mine. A huge crater 150 feet wide and nearly fifty feet deep was formed by the explosion, and this the Italians occupied. They were raked by Austrian artillery fire for some time, but before long they had established new lines in which they could defy the enemy's shells. The Austrians had at last been driven from the sole remaining window by which they could look down upon Italy.

Just about the time that the great mine on Col di Lana was completed, the Alpini made an attack of a most wonderfully daring character. Look at the mountain wall on the west side of the Trentino. A little south of Tonale Pass you will find Mount Adamello, which is famous for its huge glacier. Three rock ridges running roughly parallel, and north and south, cut across this glacier. On the eastern ridge the Austrians were

* Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807–82), Italian patriot and commander of irregular forces. He played a very large part in the liberation and unifying of Italy. At the beginning of the war his statues in the various Italian towns were surrounded by cheering crowds.

† A high narrow pass between two mountain peaks.

A Climb to Victory.

(*From the picture by H. W. Koekkoek. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

This picture shows you the Alpini making the remarkable night climb to the summit of Monte Nero in order to surprise the Austrians at daybreak. The incident is fully described on page 343.

posted, the Italians being on the western ridge. Early in April Austrian outposts occupied the central ridge, and the Italians determined to drive them off.

On the night of 11th April some three hundred Alpini, clothed in white, mounted their *skis*, and worked their way up to the glacier until they were 10,000 feet above sea level. A terrible storm assailed them; they lost their way, but were obliged to continue moving lest they should be frozen to death. In the early morning the Austrians saw them scattered over the glacier, and apparently at the mercy of their machine guns. But these wonderful men, though worn out by their long night march and their heavy losses, charged across the glacier, carried two of the Austrian positions, and killed or captured nearly all the defenders.

Seventeen days later, on a clear, starry night, two thousand Alpini again climbed the glacier, and found the Austrians on a lower saddle of the eastern ridge. They had left the highest point of the ridge in order to take shelter lower down from the bitter wind. As soon as the Alpini were sighted the Austrians made off at top speed for the peak, and a great race began. The Alpini won by a few minutes, and, with the help of other columns, managed to capture the whole glacier, but not without furious and long-continued fighting. In order to support the advance, a battery of 6-inch guns had actually been hauled up to the western edge of the glacier.

By means of feats such as this the Italians gradually made headway. They would have made more rapid progress had they possessed at the beginning of the war a large supply of heavy guns with which they could have battered down the Austrian fortresses. They had to build big guns while their infantry clung on to the ground which had been so hardly won. Through the winter their gunmakers worked hard, and in spring many new pieces were brought up to the front.

The time had come for the Austrians to make a big effort. In the previous spring they had seen von Mackensen's vast array of heavy guns blast the Russians out of their trenches on the Donajetz, and hurl them back in rapid retreat. The Austrians, or their German masters, now decided to strike a similar blow at the Italian army, which they said consisted of beggars, buffoons, mandoline players, and brigands. They were about to punish the Italians for their so-called treason. The Austrian

soldiers were told that the Italians were downhearted, that victory would be easily won, and that there would be plentiful wine and glorious loot in the towns and villages of Lombardy and Venetia.

All through the winter the Austrians collected vast quantities of food, equipment, guns, and munitions. They drew troops from Galicia, from the Balkans, and from their reserves, and by the 12th of May they had arrayed 400,000 men with 2,000 guns, many of them of enormous calibre, for the great adventure. All was ready for a mighty blow that would be sure to break the Italian front.

I need hardly tell you where the blow was to fall. Austria's great army and her heavy guns could only be brought right up to the Italian border by passing through the Trentino. You already know that the Austrian frontier railway sends an important branch along the valley of the Adige. The most likely place for the great new offensive to begin was Trent. From that city the Austrians could send troops down by rail towards Verona, or along the valley of the Brenta, so as to cut the lines of Italian communication with the Isonzo front. If this could be done quickly, the Austrians would force the Italians to give up their attacks on Gorizia, and to fall back to meet the enemy on the plains of North Italy.

Map to illustrate the great Austrian Offensive in the Trentino.

The dotted line (marked A) running from a little south of Roveredo in a north-easterly direction to the Val Borgo shows you the position to which the Italians fought their way by May 15, 1916. The great Austrian offensive began on 13th and 14th May, and the Italians were obliged to fall back. By 1st June the Italians had been driven south-eastward to the dotted line marked B B. The Austrians occupied Arsiero and Asiago, but this was the high-water mark of their advance. They could not capture Monte Pasubio, which commands the road along the Adige, and they were obliged to draw off troops to meet the "Big Push" of the Russians on their eastern frontier. By 10th June the Austrian offensive had come to an end, and the Italians had begun to attack all along the line.

CHAPTER XLII.

HOW THE AUSTRIANS MADE A GREAT EFFORT AND FAILED.

IN the first fortnight of May the great Austrian army and its huge array of mighty guns rolled down from Trent. The Italians were then holding a line which ran from a mile or two south of Rovereto to the east of the lake in which the Brenta rises. It is marked A A on the map (page 352). On 13th and 14th May they were assailed by a terrible storm of fire, followed by infantry attacks all along the line. The Italian guns were outnumbered and outclassed, and quite powerless to keep down the fire of the Austrian artillery. Our Allies were forced to fall back; but they did so slowly, selling every yard of ground at a heavy cost.

On 20th May they had to retire across their frontier and take up the new battle-front marked B B on the map. It ran, as you will notice, along the heights covering the fortresses of Arsiero and Asiago, and its pivot on the west was Monte Pasubio, which lifts itself more than seven thousand feet above sea level, and stands like a huge sentry commanding the valley of the river Arsa, running up to Rovereto, and the valley of the Posina, running eastwards past Arsiero. On their right flank the Austrians pressed down the valley of the Brenta, pushing the Italians before them. They captured Borgo, and by 1st June had opened the road to Asiago, which they occupied. On the same day another column entered Arsiero. The Austrians were now on the edge of the plains, and the situation was grave indeed.

But the Austrian advance had already reached its high-water mark. From the day on which Arsiero and Asiago were captured the tide began to turn in favour of the Italians. Cadorna now had the situation well in hand. While the Austrians were

Fighting amidst the Carnic Alps.

(*From the picture by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.*)

Alpini are shown holding a rocky ledge above a valley through which Austrian troops are advancing. The Alpini, as you know, are trained mountaineers as well as soldiers, and carry, besides their rifles, cartridges, knapsacks, etc., ropes and an ice-axe. The Italian rifle carries five rounds in the magazine and fires nickel-coated bullets.

pushing back his front he was bringing up reserves from all parts of Italy. In a single week during this perilous time he gathered together half a million men, and by means of the railways—which do not move the traveller to admiration in time of peace—hurried regiments, batteries, stores, horses, wagons, and ammunition from the uttermost parts of the peninsula to the new front.

He strengthened his hold on Monte Pasubio, and on the pass to the south-west, by means of which the Austrians hoped to push down to Verona. Had they been able to seize these two positions, they would have rolled up the left flank of the Italians. Cadorna, however, hung on like grim death to Pasubio and to the pass. The Austrians turned a vast number of guns on Pasubio, and kept up a bombardment day and night for three weeks; but all in vain. Meanwhile a six days' infantry battle raged round the pass, but the Italians did not yield an inch of ground. You can form some idea of the terrible fighting in this region when I tell you that on the last day of the battle 7,000 men died on the field. On 7th and 8th June the Austrians made violent attacks to the east of Asiago, and on the 10th hurled eighteen to twenty battalions against the mountain which commands the railway from Asiago to Schio. With the failure of this great attack the Austrian offensive came to an end. On 26th June flags were fluttering in all the towns of North Italy. The Austrians were retreating, and the Italians were hard on their heels.

The great offensive had failed, and failed miserably. The Austrians had used up an enormous amount of ammunition, and they had lost in killed and wounded at least a hundred thousand men. We shall see in a later chapter that by sending this great array of troops and the best of their guns to make an onset upon the Italians they had so weakened themselves on their Eastern front that the Russians were able to win striking successes.

The Austrians meant to fall back to prepared positions on the high ground, where they would be able to hold the Italians with smaller numbers of men. Cadorna, however, followed them up rapidly. By means of motor cars he pushed his troops up the mountain roads, over the hills, and along the woodland paths, and thus gave the enemy no rest for the sole of his foot. Early in August the Italian guns were threatening

the cross railways by which alone the Austrian withdrawal could take place.

On the Carso the assault never slackened, in spite of the peril in the Trentino. Tunnels were driven through the limestone under the feet of the Austrians, and the Italians sprang to the attack literally out of the ground, and within a few yards of the enemy's trenches. A great assemblage of Italian guns, howitzers, and heavy trench mortars rained a torrent of fire on the defensive works of Gorizia in the first week of August, and the garrison, stunned and deafened, was unable to resist the infantry assaults that followed. With bayonet and grenade the Italians drove the Austrians headlong out of Gorizia.

The key of Trieste had been won, and all was ready for the forcing of the Carso. No light task lay before the Italians. The crest of the plateau was not yet in their hands, and there was a terribly difficult region to be traversed before the Italian flag could wave over the great seaport, which, though Austrian in name, was Italian in heart.

CHAPTER XLIII.

STORIES OF THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN.

MANY interesting stories of the mountain warfare described in the previous chapters have been told, and I must tell you a few of them before I pass eastward and deal with the great offensive which the Russians so happily launched while their foes were vainly battering at Verdun and striving to overwhelm the Italians on their rocky frontier. Italy had a great asset in her King. A writer tells us that where the danger was greatest or encouragement was most needed, there the King was to be found. "He dashes in his gray motor car along the flat roads in the Friuli * region, appears on horseback on the hills near Gorizia, climbs on the back of a mule in the Carnic passes, and gains on foot, helped by an alpenstock, the heights of the peaks from which Rovereto can be seen.

"Once he crossed the Isonzo on a pontoon bridge south of Monte Nero. After sunset an officer of the General Staff came up to his Majesty and told him that an attack of the enemy was expected during the night, and that it would be unsafe for him to remain on the left bank of the river. The King promptly replied: 'If this point is dangerous for my soldiers, it is my place,' and there he remained. To the Crown Prince, who asked when he could return home to his boy, the King replied that he could not leave the front while thousands of *his* 'boys' were risking their lives."

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More than once his Majesty had a narrow escape. On one occasion he was on the left bank of the Isonzo when a mountain spur was to be stormed. A shell exploded so near

* The eastern half of the eastern loop of the S. See map, p. 338.

to him that a splinter of shrapnel wounded his horse. He had no thought for himself, but he was full of solicitude for his stricken steed, and ordered it to be sent at once to the Blue Cross, which, as you know, ministers to wounded horses. When the members of his staff bade him retire to a place of safety, he refused to listen to them. He simply called for another horse, and said, "Here we must win or die!" Then he rode amongst his troops, who greeted him with loud shouts of delight, and forthwith rushed to the attack. The position was won, and is now known to Italian soldiers as "the King's Spur."

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I am sure you will like to read a story about General Cadorna. You will remember that he came of a military family, and that his father, Count Raphael Cadorna, was a famous general. In the war of 1866 his father commanded an army corps which advanced on Trieste, but did not reach that seaport because peace was declared before he attacked the Carso. It is said that one day during the campaign which I described in the former chapter, General Cadorna placed his finger on a certain spot on his map, and said, "That is where my father got to." Then moving his finger to Trieste, he added, "And that is where *I* have to go."

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I told you on a former page that before the campaign had been long in progress the Austrians strengthened their positions high on the mountains by means of barbed wire. You will be interested to learn of the ingenious manner in which the Italians broke through the entanglements on one of the mountains. They collected a number of wild buffaloes and drove them forward towards the Austrian positions. Suddenly they exploded some bombs behind the animals. Immediately they took fright and stampeded towards the enemy's lines. So amazed were the Austrians to see a herd of buffaloes charging down upon them that panic seized them. With horns and hoofs the terrified animals smashed through the wire, and they were closely followed by the Italians. A very short struggle followed, and the Austrians holding the position surrendered.

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The Italian soldier is a great smoker. During the cam-

paign he was seldom to be seen without a cigar in his mouth, even when he was manning the trenches and beating off an attack. It is said that one night an Austrian officer, looking across the No Man's Land, saw a row of red lights behind the enemy's wire entanglements. At once he gave the order to fire. Almost before the bullets left the rifles the Italians leaped into the Austrian trenches. They had left their lighted cigars on their parapets, fifty yards behind, in order to deceive the enemy!

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You have already read stories of the extraordinary climbing powers of the Alpini. Let me tell you how they captured the position of Monte Cimone.* It is a plateau from which a mountain path rises for some four hundred feet. The Austrians occupied the plateau and the summit on 26th May, and fortified it very strongly. Machine guns were so placed that they commanded all the gullies by which it was thought possible for an enemy to climb. On one side the plateau ends in a sheer wall of rock. This side was not guarded, for the Austrians did not believe that any soldiers could ascend it.

The Italians began their attack by heavily bombarding the plateau. Their artillery hurled shells on the position from two o'clock on a Saturday afternoon until 4.30 the next morning. During the last two hours of the bombardment the Alpini were busy. Two companies scaled the face of the mountain by means of rope ladders, and the men arrived one by one under the overhanging crest, where they squatted down on tiny ledges or wedged themselves into crevices. The enemy in the meantime had become aware of their presence, and from the edge of the plateau hurled bombs and stones upon them. At ten in the morning the Alpini scrambled up, broke through the barricades, and rushed towards a redoubt which the Austrians had established on the plateau. They managed to get very near to it; but when they had flung all their bombs they were driven back to the edge of the cliff.

Then was seen an extraordinary sight. Alpini manned the rope ladders and formed a continuous chain from the Italian positions down below up to the plateau. From hand to hand they passed up bombs and stones, which the men on the plateau hurled at the foe. Meanwhile the men on the ladders were

* Two or three miles north of Arsiero.

A Frontier Duel in the Shadow of the Mountains:

(*From the picture by H. W. Koekkoek.*

This picture gives you an excellent idea of the mountain frontier between Italy and Austria. The
Milan and Venice. Austrian guns are firing from the slopes of the mountains. In the foreground are
ment. Pontebba, the village in the middle distance, is the first station in Italy reached by the traveller

Italians in Action on the Road to Pontebba.

By permission of the Illustrated London News.)

zigzag road up the mountains was constructed by Napoleon, and is the big military highway between Italians behind breastworks of stones, covered by leaves; in front of them you see the usual wire entangle- journeying from Vienna to Venice by this route.

being bombed from above. When a man fell the line moved up one. That was all. The Alpini worked on quite unconcerned. Enemy bombs which fell without exploding were handed up again in the hope that they would behave better on the return journey.

By three o'clock in the afternoon the redoubt had been won, and before daybreak on Monday the whole of Monte Cimone was in the hands of the Italians.

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The picture on page 365 gives you a good idea of the way in which the Italian peasant women helped in the campaign. Where the tracks leading to the Italian gun positions were too steep and narrow for the passage of horses and mules, or where it was not convenient to set up the aerial cables described on page 346, women and girls carried up the shells in panniers strapped to their backs. A war correspondent with the Italians thus wrote : " Everybody within the war zone appears to be doing his or her ' bit ; ' but I was somewhat surprised to see women engaged in a task which called for great physical strength and much nerve. I saw women carrying coils of barbed wire up the mountains. Each of these coils weighed close on fifty pounds. When I passed this convoy, although it was high up and the women must have been tramping for some hours, they were all as cheerful as possible, and seemed to regard their job as a pleasure jaunt. And all the time big guns were booming and shells were falling close by." Elsewhere women did all in their power to cheer and encourage the soldiers. While the great assault on the Carso was in preparation the women of certain Italian towns wove garlands of flowers and sent them to the front. The men bound them round their helmets, and thus, crowned with flowers, fought their way on to the plateau.

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In earlier pages of this volume I have mentioned the steel helmets which were served out first to the French and, later on, to the British on the Western front. The Italians supplied some of their men with almost complete suits of armour, and utilized these ironclad warriors for the purpose of cutting the enemy's wire. It is interesting to notice that in this and in other ways both sides reverted to the war customs of their forefathers. From the very earliest times men in lofty positions

have rolled great stones and boulders down mountain sides upon the enemy below. Frequently the Austrians collected boulders on the edge of steep slopes, and set under each of them a branch of a tree to serve as a lever. By lifting the levers the boulders were sent crashing down the mountain sides on their errands of death and destruction. Those of you who have read the story of how Hannibal * crossed the Alps in the days of old will remember that the mountain tribes frequently impeded his advance in the same way. The wild hillmen on the North-West Frontier of India have frequently bombarded our own troops in a similar fashion.

During the winter Italians and Austrians alike adopted a device of nature in order to render their fighting men less conspicuous. Many animals and insects, as you probably know, assume the colour of their surroundings, and are thus less easily seen by their foes. For example, mountain hares, which in summer are blue-gray in colour, become white in winter when the hills are covered with snow. During the winter fighting the soldiers on both sides were dressed in white clothing, and thus became invisible when the valleys and hills were a dazzling expanse of snow. The sentries high up on the mountains in exposed places looked more like Arctic explorers than fighting men.

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Already you must have admired the great ingenuity and perseverance displayed by the Italian engineers in overcoming the difficulties of transport amidst the high mountains. Roads had to be constructed before the guns could be advanced; positions had to be blasted out high on the snowy summits; and aerial cables had to be established to supply the gunners with shells, stores, and food. By means of these slung wires guns weighing nearly eight hundredweight were carried to the top of precipitous peaks. Heavier guns were hauled along the roads by steam tractors, and man-hauled by means of drag ropes at zigzag turns. In some cases cogged rails were laid down, and teams of men by sheer force dragged them into position. (See picture, pp. 344–345.) Batteries of guns, each weighing eleven tons, with a carriage of five tons and

* Carthaginian general (247–183 B.C.), one of the greatest military geniuses of olden days; crossed the Alps from Gaul (218 B.C.), and for a time overran Italy.

a platform (in sections) of thirty tons, were in this way actually installed at a height of 9,000 feet. The very heaviest siege howitzers had to be used, for " high-angle " fire was the only possible way of subduing many of the Austrian forts, which were hidden away amidst the crags on the steep upper slopes of the mountains.

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One of the most vivid descriptions of the conditions under which the war was fought along the Isonzo front was supplied by a wounded Austrian officer :—

" When I was wounded the battle was raging along the whole line. I was standing on a point from which I could see the whole of the Gorizia battlefield. The country below me was a ring of death, and in the south, near the sea, the whole line was aflame with the guns. . . . There are two great features in the fighting on the Isonzo : one is the amazing rapidity of the gun-fire, and the other the closeness of the enemy positions to each other. Imagine, then, the strain on the nerve !

" The Italians prepare every one of their attacks with many hours of bombardment, and it happens very often that after such a deluge of fire they simply send out patrols to ascertain if there are any living beings yet in our positions. The patrols return with the news that there are defenders still alive, and the bombardment continues until all have been put out of action. The cases of insanity in consequence of the nerve shocks sustained by the bombardment were very numerous. One of our men after one of these cannonades refused to eat or drink, for he said that the Italians had poisoned everything. At last he died. Another in a fit of insanity began to fire at his own officers. He was not seized until he had wounded three of them. No doubt the Italians also felt the strain, for we often heard them cry, ' Santa Maria ! ' Our men could only survive by hiding in caves and tunnels, and by protecting themselves with sheets of steel. I can truly state that the greatest heroes of human endurance in this war are those men who fought on the Italian front, whether they were defenders or attackers.

" The two opposing lines in some parts were so close to each other that only fifteen yards divided them. In such positions any one who showed an inch of himself was doomed to

Italian Women carrying Shells to the Gun Positions on Alpine Crests.

(*From the picture by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.*)

certain death, in spite of the steel protectors. The distance was so small between the lines that the Italians in one place succeeded in pulling down our wire entanglements with long sticks.

" When, later on, I was wounded by shrapnel, I could see nothing on the way to Gorizia but wounded men struggling along or being carried in an endless line. There were soldiers' graves by the hundred along the roads that were under the fire of the Italian guns. The men who struggled along on the 'unhealthy' roads did not seem to pay any attention to the shells and shrapnel; they walked with complete indifference, as much as to say, 'We've had our share; these shells are not for us.' "

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It is said that, despite the terrible and almost unceasing bombardment, the people of Gorizia lived much in the usual way. Many business premises naturally were closed, for much of the trade of the place was in Italian hands. Goods and provisions of all kinds could be procured, but the prices were very high. Eggs, for example, cost tenpence each. " In one street," wrote a correspondent, " a whole row of flower shops remained open, their windows ablaze with roses, violets, and asters. Indeed, in this town, under fire day and night, the flower trade flourished steadily. Barbers, too, shaved on with a steady hand amid the thunder of the artillery, Austrian and Italian. Here and there one might buy rings made from the aluminium fuses of Italian shells, and inlaid with copper. They were displayed as 'Souvenirs of Gorizia.' "

So many shells fell into the town that their fearful novelty soon wore off, and people who suspended business for fear of them lost caste with their neighbours. Yet almost every street already bore its marks of warfare in the shape of broken windows, cracked walls, and shell holes. There was one tower almost completely girdled with shrapnel pits. Certain streets were barricaded as being too dangerous for traffic, and one of them, which had suffered very badly, was renamed " Shrapnel Street." Nevertheless people frequently scrambled between the wooden barriers and the house walls, and took a walk along the forbidden ways.

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I will conclude this budget of stories with a word picture

of the Carso, or Karst, from the pen of a Scottish chaplain long resident in Venice.* When next I describe the fighting on this front I shall have to tell you of the Italian advance along the Carso. You can only realize the enormous difficulties which beset the Italians in this part of their campaign if you have a clear picture in your mind of the wilderness of desolation known as the Carso.

" We are here on the edge of the Karst (in Italian, Carso), and on the edge of the fighting. In years gone by the word Karst made me think of our own word *Carse*, and of the bonnie Carse o' Gowrie.† It does so still—not, however, by way of likeness, but of contrast. A more barren, forbidding, inhospitable tract of country than the Karst I never saw. As far as the eye can reach northwards and eastwards—yes, and much farther than one could walk or even drive in a long summer's day—there is nothing but a treeless, lifeless, waterless wilderness of rough ground, strewn all over with rugged limestone boulders of all sizes. Everywhere, too, there are large funnel-shaped holes, some fifty feet in diameter, some a few hundreds. Their sides are perfectly formed, and slope gradually downwards until they come to a point at the bottom. They are all of moderate depth, from fifty to a hundred feet ; the sides are generally grown over with grass, and sometimes there are clumps of shrubs and dwarf trees. Occasionally they are flattened at the bottom, and cultivated."

The writer then goes on to say that if there is nothing of beauty on the surface of the Karst, there is a wealth of it underneath. The surface is only a crust, covering a fairy world below ground. At Adelsberg, some thirty miles south-east of Gorizia, there are marvellous caves, the largest and most magnificent in Europe. They run under the Carso, and for five and a half miles you may traverse streets and lanes lighted by electricity, and pass from one to the other of four vast grottos, in one of which balls are held twice a year. Everywhere glistening columns of huge stalactites are seen. There are lakes and pools in which their splendours are reflected, and streams and rivulets working their way to the light, and slowly enlarging the caves as they do so. In the waters live eyeless fish.

* *Scotsman*, March 24, 1916.

† Rich arable district on the north bank of the Tay, stretching for fifteen miles from the Hill of Kinnoul towards Dundee.

"But it is not in this enchanted region that the Italian soldiers are fighting, but on the dreary, wild, spongelike, rocky crust above, now colder and drearier than ever, for it is covered with snow, and frequently enveloped in mist. Across it, too, often blows, at this season of the year, the 'Bora,' a fierce north-east wind, which has been known to unroof houses, overturn loaded wagons, and even stop a railway train. Indeed, the railway at many places is protected against it by lofty buttressed walls of wood and stone.

"This, then, is the Carso, where the Italian soldiers are fighting. The conflict calls for patience, courage, perseverance, and endurance, and these virtues the Italians exercise with right good will. It ought to be remembered that the whole European conflict hangs together as one. No matter where the fighting is, the result is not merely local, but general. For example, the heroic conduct of the French at Verdun roused the Italians to undertake a vigorous offensive here on the Carso, which in its turn was felt at Verdun, as it prevented the transport thither of Austrian troops and cannon."

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The Austrians, says the same writer, were so badly fed that at places where the trenches were within shouting distance they frequently begged the Italians to throw them some bread. Not only were they badly fed, but badly cared for, and the consequence was that they were glad to be taken prisoners.

"One of the happiest of these Austrian prisoners was a young aviator. His sympathies were Italian, as are those of most of the inhabitants of the towns and villages on the banks of the Isonzo, and along the southern edge of the Carso towards Trieste. He told us how five times he flew over Venice as a pilot. Once he was ordered to circle over St. Mark's Square. At a height of 4,000 feet he could see the people walking up and down and sitting at the cafés, all gazing up at his aeroplane. A bomb was dropped, and the piazza cleared in a moment, but soon filled up again. He did not know whether it was aimed at the Campanile, on which the Austrians falsely assert anti-aircraft guns were mounted, or at St. Mark's Church. Fortunately, the bomb fell between the two, doing no more damage than making a hole in the pavement of the piazza. The aviator himself was glad to learn this fact."

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE GREAT RUSSIAN RECOVERY.

IT is to Russia that we must turn if we would witness the great and moving drama of the war. Neither France nor Britain has suffered so many and such striking reverses of fortune as she; neither of them has been lifted to such heights of hope or flung down to such depths of gloom. At one moment we see her banners waving on the field of triumph; the scene suddenly changes, and she hovers on the brink of disaster. Every misfortune in the whole armoury of fate seems to be heaped upon her; yet her courage never falters, and her faith grows not dim. From every blow she recovers, taught by experience and chastened by suffering. She presses on anew and never despairs, assured that in the end the God of battles will reward her patient and uncomplaining fortitude with the crown of victory.

We see her at the outset of war suffering one of the cruellest defeats in her history, but in the Austrian crown-land of Galicia moving from success to success, while the watching world foretells that ere long her legions will tread the soil of their arch-enemy. A threat to her northern line, and she is forced to retrace her steps and give up all that she has won. We see her next meeting a furious thrust at Warsaw, the key fortress of Poland, and flinging back the foe almost from the gates of the city. Then once more we hear the thunder of hoofs, the tramp of armed men, and the rumble of the guns as she presses westward over her old tracks. Towns and cities fall before her; she struggles amidst the wooded hills and bare peaks of the mountain barrier of Hungary, and is almost within sight of the German border. Again she beats

off an attack on the Polish capital, and is rewarded by a victory that just falls short of disaster for her enemy.

The tide of battle ebbs and flows in Galicia; Russia recoils, but still keeps her footing on alien soil. In the spring of 1915, when she grievously lacks arms and ammunition, her enemies assail her with a tempest of fire, and she is forced back and back almost to her own frontier. Her doom seems to be sealed; but her generals have the courage to retreat into the bowels of their own land, drawing the foe after them. All her conquests are abandoned; her fortresses are overwhelmed; she yields whole provinces to the invader, and leaves hundreds of thousands of her people to the mercy of a pitiless conqueror. Eastward and ever eastward she moves, and meanwhile her arsenals and foundries work night and day at feverish heat to put weapons into the hands of her soldiers; the Allies come to her aid, and slowly but surely she gains the strength to oppose her enemies. Her forces in the south press forward again; they gain ground, and once more fortune smiles upon her. At the close of the year 1915 there is every sign that her recovery cannot be long delayed.

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You remember the line which the Russians held through the long dark winter. From the Gulf of Riga it ran along the western bank of the Dwina as far as Dvinsk; then it struck south, some fifty miles to the east of Vilna, passed to the west of Baranovitchi,* and plunged into the Marshes of the Pripet. Thence it proceeded southward in front of Rovno, and so on to the border of Rumania—a distance in all as the crow flies of about six hundred miles, though, of course, much more if all the curves and twists and zigzags of the line are taken into account.

Fix your attention for a few moments on the Marshes of the Pripet.† This great stretch of water-logged ground, with here and there patches of hard soil, is never fit for the movements of great masses of men. Rarely even in the depths of winter is it so firmly frozen that guns and transport can move freely across it. The Marshes divide the eastern front into two distinct parts, and compel both friend and foe to treat the northern section as a command quite separate from the southern section.

* *Bar-an-o-vit'chee.* † See map, p. 379.

Crossing the Pripet Marshes.

(*From the picture by H. C. Seppings-Wright. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

All over the surface of the marshes are deep sluggish streams and flat island patches of firmer ground. To cross the streams and link together the few causeways that cross the district, the Russians built timber bridges supported on trestles. A Russian infantry regiment is here seen marching over one of these bridges.

You know enough about the climate of Russia to be well aware that during winter warlike operations must be brought almost to a standstill. Were hard frost to prevail all the time, armies could move and battles could be fought. There are, however, intervals of partial thaw which turn fields and roads into morasses, along which wheeled vehicles cannot make their way.

Then comes the spring. In Western Europe it is a delightful season, full of the promise of summer. But in Eastern Europe it is the time when the frozen ground gives up its moisture and the whole land becomes a quagmire. Trenches are flooded, low levels become inland seas, and the roads are axle-deep in mud. When the thaw is over, a season of about six months sets in, and during this time troops and transports can be moved freely and war can be waged in real earnest.

In the south operations can begin earlier. You will remember that von Mackensen was able to begin his great drive on April 28, 1915. In 1916, however, it was not until the beginning of June that the Russians were ready to make the great advance which I am about to describe. They did not intend to put their fortunes to the test until they were fully armed and munitioned. They chose a fortunate hour in which to strike. The Germans were in the midst of their great assault on Verdun, and needed every man and gun that they could spare for service in France. The Austrians were also involved in a great offensive in the Trentino, where, as you know, they had massed 400,000 men and large numbers of heavy guns. The Russians began their advance at the moment when their foes had weakened their eastern front, and were so deeply engaged elsewhere that they could find but few reinforcements.

In what part of the line should they strike—to the south of the Pripet marshes, or to the north? They chose the southern sector, for several reasons. First of all, because it was held mainly by Austrians, who are far less formidable foes than Germans. The Russians were well aware that the Austrians had sent many troops and the cream of their guns to the Trentino front. Attacks on the southern sector would also clear the Rumanian border, and, if successful, give them access to Galicia and the best of all roads to the heart of Germany and Austria.

We may divide this southern sector into three separate arenas of war: (1) what is known as Volhynia *—that is, the country between the marshes of the Pripet and Galicia; (2) a central section facing Eastern Galicia; and (3) Bukovina. During the winter Austrian armies under a kindly old gentleman, the Archduke Frederick, were holding the line from the Pripet marshes to the border of Rumania. The Archduke's troops had made themselves very comfortable in this region. They had established bakeries and slaughter-houses behind their lines, and had even erected sausage factories. There were also vegetable gardens in the rear, and in the villages and camps behind their lines pigs and cattle were fattened. Mr. Stanley Washburn, the *Times* special correspondent, thus describes the winter quarters of the Austrians as they appeared when the Russians gained possession of them :—

"At a safe distance from rifle fire behind the lines one came on the officers' quarters, which seemed like a park in the heart of the forest. Here one found a beer garden with buildings beautifully constructed from logs, and decorated with rustic tracery, while chairs and tables made of birch still stood in lonely groups about the garden just where they were left when the occupants of the place suddenly departed. In a sylvan bower was erected a beautiful altar of birch, trimmed with rustic traceries, the whole being surrounded by a fence through which one passed under an arch neatly made of birch branches. The Austrians must have had an extremely comfortable time here. Everything is clean and neat, and, no matter how humble the work, always in good taste. One of the advancing corps captured a trench with a piano in it. It was clear that the Austrians did not spend a desolate or lonely winter on this front."

The Austrians, in Volhynia, in the centre, and farther south in Bukovina, believed that their lines were impregnable. Every possible device had been adopted to render them so. In most places there were five lines of trenches, one behind the other, some of them from 15 to 20 feet deep. Everywhere they had field railways and a fine system of roads to supply and reinforce their front. Where, as in the marshy regions of Volhynia, trenches could not be easily dug, breastworks of timber were erected, and were approached by causeways paved with logs. In some places these log roads were built on embankments, so as to be high above the floods. Between the lower courses of the Styr and the Stokhod there were several bridges of this kind, some of them over two miles long.

* *Vo-lin'e-a.*

A German military writer on the 5th of June said that the Russians would need armies several millions strong to break through this formidable front. "The Russians," he said, "can have no success unless they compel us to bring troops from other theatres of war. But that will not be necessary, for we are quite strong enough there to hold on the defensive." He felt sure that "this last adventure" of the Tsar's armies would "end in disaster." He was soon to be undeceived.

The Russians in Volhynia and Bukovina were now under the command of General Brussilov, of whom you have already heard more than once in these pages. He came of an old Russian noble family, and was a man of medium height and spare build, with fine features and steady, sharp gray eyes. He was a splendid horseman, and though sixty-three years of age, was full of life and vigour. By his generalship in Galicia during the earlier campaigns, and by his activity in September 1915, when he captured Rovno, and even, for a short time, Lutsk, he was already marked out as Ivanov's successor.

Brussilov had two objects in view in making his advance. In Volhynia he proposed to capture the railway junction of Kovel, so as to prevent the Germans to the north sending reinforcements and material to the Austrians in the south. When Kovel was seized he meant to strike south-westward, and, in conjunction with a movement from the south, attempt to envelop the Austrians and destroy their armies. At the least he hoped to make them fall back.

In Bukovina he had another object in view. He proposed to seize the important railway centre of Czernowitz,* and occupy all the province. This would put him in touch with the Rumanians, and enable them, if they should elect to play a part in the war—as they did on 27th August—to begin their operations without having the Austrians on their flank. Further, by driving the Austrians out of Bukovina, Brussilov would put himself on the right or southern flank of the Austrians, who were holding the central part of the line.

By 1st June the Austrians became aware that the Russians were about to begin a great offensive. A flutter of alarm ran along their lines, and they no longer boasted that they were impregnable. The Germans, hoping to forestall the Russians,

* *Tsher-nyo'vits*, capital of Bukovina, Austria; on the Pruth, 165 miles by rail south-east of Lemberg.

General Brussilov. [*Photo, Record Press.*

Before the war Brussilov was widely known in Russia as a brilliant cavalry leader. His generalship in Galicia during the earlier campaigns, and his activity in September 1915, marked him out as the successor of Ivanov. His soldiers were devoted to him. A timid friend suggested to one of them that retreat might be necessary. "What—retreat!" replied the man. "No. Impossible! We are Brussilovs!"

began an attack north of the Marshes; but it was of no effect, and did not in the least interfere with the execution of Brussilov's plans. For months he had been studying the enemy's positions, and working out the best means of attacking them. On 4th June his guns began to thunder all along the line of 250 miles, and for a period of from twelve to twenty hours they never ceased to hurl shells upon the Austrian trenches. The Austrians were now tasting the medicine which von Mackensen had administered to the Russians fifteen months before.

When the artillery preparation was over, the Russians dashed forward with the bayonet, and in a short time were in possession of the Austrian first-line trenches. Then the Russian gunners lifted their sights and lengthened their fuses, and rained down a curtain of fire which cut off all communication with the rear. The Austrians were trapped; the solid deep trenches of which they had boasted proved to be snares. Thousands were killed by the Russian bayonets, and though the Hungarians fought furiously for a time, they were soon seen holding up their hands.

On that 4th day of June the Russians captured no less than 13,000 prisoners. Even more remarkable was their success on the third day of the offensive (6th June), when the haul of prisoners numbered 40,000 rank and file and 900 officers. Artillery, machine guns, trench mortars, searchlights, and all sorts of war material also fell into their hands. A number of batteries were taken with guns and limbers all complete. We in the West stood amazed at the swift overthrow of the Austrians, and at the enormous number of prisoners captured in three short days. The success of the Russians was due to the splendid timing of the operations all along the line, and to the fine way in which the various branches of the service supported each other. "On our entire front," a correspondent wrote, "the attack began at the same hour, and it was impossible for the enemy to shift his troops from one quarter to another, as our attacks were being pressed equally at all points."

* * * * * * *

The greatest success during the opening days of the offensive was won in Volhynia, where the Russians were aiming at the railway junction of Kovel, the meeting-place of five railways, and at the strongly-fortified city of Lutsk, which stands on the Styr, about one hundred miles to the south-east of Kovel.

Should Kovel fall, the enemy would be forced to abandon all that he held east of that place and south of the Marshes. On the opening day of the attack the Russians broke clean through the Austrian lines, and their cavalry poured through the gaps and cut off all retreat. Next day, while the Archduke was celebrating his birthday at Lutsk, the alarming news reached him that his " impregnable front " had been pierced in half a dozen places, and that the Russians were advancing with amazing speed. Fresh troops were hurried up to stem the torrent, but in vain. In two days the Russians advanced more than twenty miles, and everywhere the enemy fled before them. So great was the panic of the Austrians that at one point they left six 4-inch guns ready loaded, and cases of shell beside them. About half-past eight on the evening of 6th June the Russians began to pour into Lutsk. Everywhere they saw signs that the enemy had retreated in hot haste. Military stores of all kinds had been left behind, and thousands of wounded had been abandoned.

Not until 16th June was the Russian advance in Volhynia stayed. By this time a great bulge had been made in the Austro-German line. The bulge began at Kolki, on the Styr, then followed the course of the river Stokhod. West of Lutsk it was more than fifty miles deep. A great salient had been created, and the Russians were in a favourable position for breaking through to the north-west towards Kovel, and to the south-west towards Lemberg.

The Germans, of course, counter-attacked, and a violent battle raged in the strip of ground, only six or eight miles wide, between the Styr and the Stokhod. The Germans were beaten back, and a Siberian regiment crossed the Stokhod and captured a whole German battalion. In the same battle the Hussars of White Russia charged through three lines of the enemy, and did awful execution. On the evening of 16th June the Russian right wing was only about twenty miles from Kovel, while the left wing was seven miles from Brody.

At this point we must leave the northern section and learn what was happening in the central section, between Dubno and Buczacz.* The Russian troops in this part of the line were set the task of holding the enemy's centre while the great out-flanking movements from the north and the south were in

* *Boot'shatsh.*

progress. While the forces in the Bukovina were pressing northward to get on the right flank of the enemy, the forces in Volhynia were pushing southward to get on his left flank, and thus envelop him. Pressed on both flanks, the Austrians strove to break the Russian centre, and very hot fighting followed. In the central sector no great advance was made, or indeed expected. Nevertheless some ground was gained. Dubno, the third of the Volhynian fortresses, was captured, and by 16th June the Russian frontier station on the line from Rovno through Brody to Lemberg had been seized. During these operations one of the newly formed Russian regiments behaved most gallantly. After a fierce fight the men forded a river with the water up to their chins. "One company was engulfed, and died a heroic death; but the valour of their comrades and their officers resulted in the disorderly flight of the enemy, of whom 70 officers and 5,000 men were taken prisoners." *

One stirring incident of this struggle must not be forgotten. It is the story of a dashing attack made by Russian cavalry on eight dismounted regiments of Hungarian horsemen.

"In the early morning of 8th June the Russians started out from a certain hamlet, and forced the stream with such unexpected rapidity that the Hungarians had no time to destroy the bridge, and hurriedly retreated to a village which we will call S. On the following day the Russians awaited the arrival of an infantry brigade before starting the attack, which began about 8 p.m. Dragoons were in front, with Hussars behind them, and Lancers and Ural Cossacks in the rear. The charge was led by the commander of the regiment, his senior staff officer, the adjutant, and the chaplain. In front waved the regimental standard. The chaplain blessed the commander and the men, and then took part in the attack. Stretched out in one long line, squadron after squadron charged, till the field was covered with horsemen, whose shining lance points and swords flung back the rays of the setting sun. The enemy's fierce but scattered rifle and Maxim fire failed to check them, though in that mad charge many horses fell with their riders. The Hungarians pushed forward two or three battalions in order to take the Russians in the rear; but this move had been foreseen, and Russian flanking forces with Maxims mowed them down as they emerged from the woods. The survivors were driven back in disorder. The Hungarians fought bravely, and groups of them made a desperate stand. Some of them flung away their rifles, and, seizing the lances, strove to wrest them

* Colonel Tataroff, whose troops performed this fine feat, was wounded in the heart by a shrapnel bullet in the third week of July. He cried out, "I am killed!" but by a supreme effort rose to his feet and dashed forward, shouting, "Charge!" He died with this order on his lips.

Map to illustrate the Russian Offensive between the Marshes of the Pripet and the Rumanian Border.

The broad black line shows the Russian front on June 2, 1916.

from the troopers' grasp. Their resistance, however, was in vain. All was soon over. Some two thousand prisoners were taken, and many trophies, including two howitzers, which the Russians removed by harnessing their horses to them with traces made of plaited strips cut from their cloaks. At 9 p.m. the bugles sounded the 'Fall in,' and though not all responded to the muster roll, the Russian losses were inferior to those of the enemy. The Hungarian general, in congratulating the Russian cavalry, said: 'We thought cavalry had outlived its time, but evidently there is still good work left for it to do.' "

The Austrians had by this time brought their ill-starred adventure in the Trentino to an end, and they were hurrying men and guns to the eastern front in order to "stop the rot." The Germans also had scraped together troops from France for the purpose of flinging them into the great gap in the Austrian lines. On 16th June they began a violent counter-offensive, and the Russians were forced to withdraw from the western bank of the Stokhod. Many days of fierce battle followed, with the result that the Lutsk salient was slightly flattened out. The Germans fought desperately; they knew that a new Russian army was about to take the field, and that the British and French were ready to make a mighty assault in the West. They therefore strove with all their might to beat back the Russians while there was yet time. All the efforts of the Germans, however, could not win back the ground that had been lost.

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Look at the map on page 379, and follow the course of the river Dniester, which rises on the north-eastern slopes of the Carpathians and winds its way across Eastern Galicia. Notice its tributary the Strypa, which flows almost due south to join the main stream. For about thirty miles the Strypa formed the front between the opposing armies. The country west of the river is a high plateau seamed by deep ravines, each with a river flowing at the bottom and dense woods on the steep banks. You can easily understand that these ravines formed a strong natural line of defence. Farther north, as far as Tarnopol, the ground is undulating, the valleys are marshy, and the rivers broaden out in many places into ponds and lakes. In this part of the line the Russians made but little headway. Farther south, however, they won a striking success. After ten days of battle the Austrians were driven from the eastern bank of the Strypa, and ground was gained

beyond the river. Many prisoners and a number of big guns fell to the victors. Then came a lull; the advance was not resumed until the early days of July.

* * * * * * *

Now we must see how the Russians fared in Bukovina, which, you will remember, is a mountainous country thickly covered with forests, in which the beech trees from which the province takes its name are most common. About twenty miles south of the Dniester runs the Pruth, and still further to the south is the river Sereth. A glance at the map shows you that the valleys of the Pruth and the Sereth are the natural highways of Bukovina. Along them run the railways and the roads; between them is very difficult hill country.

The thick black line on the map shows you how the Russian front ran south of the Marshes when their offensive began on 2nd June. You will notice that it touched the Dniester at the point U. It roughly followed the winding course of that river eastward and near Okna, then struck southward to the Pruth. To the south-west of the loop where the line swung round to the south there is a little plain. The Russians proposed to cross the Dniester, carry this plain, and from it begin their advance into Bukovina. On 2nd June they opened a bombardment of the Austrian positions on the plain, and two days later flung their infantry across the river. The Austrians withdrew a few miles, only to discover that another attack had begun on their right flank. A very desperate battle was fought, and the Hungarians showed great courage; but after four days of struggle the enemy began to give way. By 9th June he was beaten, and the Russians were only fourteen miles from Czernovitz. Over 18,000 soldiers, some 350 officers, and ten guns were captured.

A wedge had now been driven in between the Dniester and the Pruth, and the gates into Bukovina were wide open. The defeated Austrians sought safety in flight, and the Russians followed hard after them. On the morning of 13th June the people of Sniatyn,* a town on the Pruth about midway between Czernovitz and Kolomea,† saw their own soldiers streaming through the streets in hurried retreat. All night long they had heard the roar of guns, and had seen the sky red with the glow of burning viilages. Homeless refugees, with all that

* *Shnee-ā'tin.* † *Kol-o'mya.*

they could save from the wreck of their homes, had been coming in for days past. In the afternoon the Russians entered Sniatyn for the third time during the war.

The Austrians were now in full flight. On the line of the Pruth they made a stand for three days; but their plight was hopeless, and they knew it. On Sunday, 11th June, the officials of Czernovitz posted bills informing the people that they would probably be under the fire of Russian guns that day. Six days later Austrian transports of all kinds were rolling through the streets, and the rumour that the soldiers were behind them sent a thrill of despair through the city. Trains crammed with refugees left the station. In the course of one day between 6,000 and 8,000 people abandoned their homes.

Prisoners were taken in shoals. Between the 4th and the 13th of June the Russian armies which started from the Dniester had captured more than 750 officers, nearly 40,000 men, and large numbers of guns and Maxims. On 16th June the line of the Pruth was forced, and next morning Russian troops entered Czernovitz, and were received with joy by those of the residents who had remained. For the fifth time during this war Czernovitz had fallen into the hands of a conqueror.

Once the Pruth was passed the Russians moved rapidly. Three days later they crossed the Sereth. On 22nd June Kuty, on a tributary of the Pruth, was entered, and from three sides—north-east, east, and south-east—Russian forces rapidly closed in on Kolomea. The capture of this town would give them the entrance to the Delatyn Pass, by means of which they could if they wished threaten the plains of Hungary. Meanwhile the country south of the Sereth was being overrun. After a stubborn fight on the evening of 23rd June the town of Kimpolung, only a few miles from the Rumanian border, was seized. With the capture of this place the whole of the Bukovina was once more in the hands of the Russians. In three weeks they had conquered a province more than half as large as Wales, and were on the borders of Rumania.

* * * * * * *

The whirligig of time had at last brought its revenges. Within a single month Russia had inflicted a series of smashing defeats upon those who, less than a year ago, fondly imagined that they had made an end of her. Never in all the history of warfare had such enormous captures of men and material been

Cossacks bringing in Austro-German Prisoners.

(*From the picture by H. C. Seppings-Wright. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

In popular stories the Cossacks are often accused of cruelty. Here they are seen helping along their footsore and weary prisoners, and carrying the wounded upon their horses.

made in so brief a time. Between one-third and one-half of all the Austro-German forces between the Marshes and the Rumanian border had fallen into Russian hands. Between 4th June and the end of the month no fewer than 217,000 Austrians and Germans had been made prisoners, and the number of killed and wounded could hardly be estimated. In any former war such huge losses would have meant utter ruin to the side that suffered them ; but in this war, which is a war of nations and not of armies, the blow was not decisive. There were many bitter battles yet to be fought before the Central Powers were ready to cry, " Hold, enough ! "

The Russian hammer-strokes had not yet ceased to fall. The second chapter of the great offensive was about to be opened. The story of how it fared must be left to our next volume.

* * * * * * *

So ended the first half of the year 1916. In six months the whole aspect of the war had changed. The Central Powers had failed, alike in the West, in the East, and in the South. They had wasted their armies in a terribly costly struggle for the possession of a city that had no value save the faded glory of a name, and they had vainly flung away life and credit amidst rocky steeps and Alpine snows. And while they were thus draining away their failing strength Russia arose like a giant refreshed, and smote them hip and thigh. Ere her mighty onset was stayed, Britain and France, shoulder to shoulder, were on the eve of the vastest offensive ever essayed by man. So, on the last evening of June, the stars that gleamed forth in the heavens were beacons of hope and promise to the Allies. They had good cause to believe that the night was far spent and the day was at hand.

END OF VOLUME FIVE.

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